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# The Grey Friars of Chester

BY

J. H. E. BENNETT

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[*From the Chester Archaeological Society's Journal,*  
*Vol. XXIV., Part I.*]

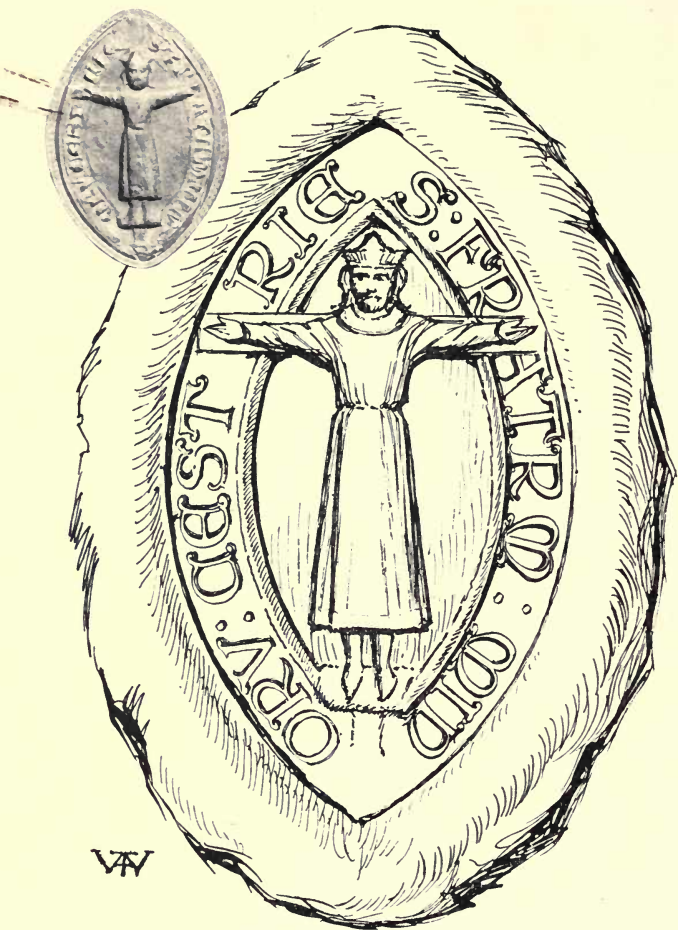
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1921







Seal of the Chester Grey Friars.  
(Inset Actual Size.)



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BY

J. H. E. BENNETT.



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## The Grey Friars of Chester.

By J. H. E. BENNETT.

(Read Nov. 16th, Dec. 14th, 1920, and Mar. 15th, 1921).

### PREFATORY NOTE.

It has been the aim of the author to make these notes on the Grey Friars of Chester as complete as is possible, although it was recognized from the start that, at best, they could only indicate the outline of an eventful history. In the course of the work many points arose which needed elucidation at the hands of authorities on mediæval history, and it is both a duty and a pleasure to acknowledge the kindness with which requests for advice and assistance were met. To Mr. A. Hamilton Thompson, M.A., F.S.A., who not only perused the manuscript, but also supplied many valued hints and notes, the author is under deep obligation. The notes signed A.H.T. are from Mr. Thompson's pen. The author's thanks are, further, extended to Mr. R. Stewart-Brown, M.A., F.S.A., and to Mr. J. Brownhill, M.A., for much useful advice and information; to Mr. J. A. Herbert (Department of Manuscripts, British Museum), to whom the Seal of the Friary was submitted; to Mr. W. M. Simpson, of Liverpool, who supplied particulars which made clear the later ownership of the site; to Mr. Arthur Jones and Messrs. J. E. and G. Mayers (the architects and contractors for the Race Company's stables), for facilities afforded to view the excavations; and, finally, to the author's old friends, Mr. T. A. Williams, and Mr. P. H. Lawson, A.R.I.B.A., to whom he is so frequently indebted, not only on account of their skill with the pencil and generous use of it on his behalf, but in many other ways.

## 1.—INTRODUCTION.



N "A Perambulation of the Walls of Chester," written about the year 1706, the writer thus describes the view, as seen from the southern side of the Water Gate. "Had we lived a brace of centuries ago, we should have met with one of the finest prospects in or about the city: for on the left hand, almost adjoining to the Walls, you would have seen the Black Friars, Grey Friars," and he then mentions other establishments which "are so altered, or altogether in ruins, that one could scarce imagine there were any such places."<sup>1</sup> Time has now completed the demolition of these buildings, and little remains in Chester to remind the present generation that for three hundred years colonies of the Black, Grey and White Friars were settled in the city, and played no insignificant part in its life. If one or two fragments of crumbling stone walls (which may or may not have formed part of the boundaries of the friaries) are excepted, practically all that is left above ground lies in the names of bye streets, Black Friars, Grey Friars, White Friars. Even these do not bear investigation. In two out of the three instances they are misnomers, inasmuch as the present thoroughfares do not occupy the sites of the ancient Black Friars Lane and Grey Friars Lane, so known when the houses of the mendicant brothers were in existence. Indeed they are not in their immediate vicinity.

The high ideals and rapid growth of the Friars in the early years of their foundation, and the subsequent gradual failure of their influence, afford a most interesting study, and when, as in the case of Chester, a city has been a seat of three of the orders, some wonder may be felt that the history of the establishments has not received more attention. A writer has, indeed, truthfully observed that "there is perhaps a greater paucity of information respecting the ancient friaries in Chester, than concerning any other subject connected with our ancient city,

<sup>1</sup> Hemingway's *History of Chester*, i., 359.

“ of so recent a date.”<sup>2</sup> The chief reason for this apparent neglect is to be found in the scanty records left behind by the brothers themselves. But, in spite of this, if it is not possible to construct a more or less complete local history of the various orders, much information respecting them can be gathered and, at least, an outline of their story compiled.

In the case of the Black Friars, such an account has already been written,<sup>3</sup> but, as regards the other two orders, no history has hitherto been printed, although the syllabus of the Chester Archæological Society for 1891-2 mentions a promised paper on the *History of the Chester Friaries, White, Black and Grey*. So far as can be gathered, this paper, if prepared, was neither read nor printed, and all that is generally known is gleaned from brief references in local histories and other works of an antiquarian character.

## 2.—ST. FRANCIS AND HIS ORDER.

The Order of Grey Friars was founded by St. Francis, the son of a merchant of Assisi, where he was born towards the close of the twelfth century. His education was scanty, and, as a young man, his appetite for amusement was more than usually keen, but, even then, his charity to the poor was conspicuous. At the age of twenty Francis is said to have passed through a spiritual crisis, with the result that he decided to devote himself to solitude, prayer, and service to the sick and poor, a resolution for which he was disinherited. Francis shortly afterwards began to preach, and he was joined by disciples who, like him, first disposed of their possessions.

The brothers lived in huts formed of the branches of trees, and wandered in pairs about the country, sleeping in the porches of churches or barns or under hedgerows, and mixing with and preaching to the poor, the leper, and the outcast. By their original conception the brothers were to possess nothing beyond what was absolutely necessary for

<sup>2</sup> Hemingway, *op. cit.*, i., 359.

<sup>3</sup> Palmer's *Black Friars of Chester* (Reliquary, xxiii).

life. They were to live by work and only to beg as a last resort. They were to make no provision for the morrow, lay by no store, accumulate no capital, possess no land, handle no money. Their clothes were to be of the poorest and their dwellings of the meanest. On the other hand, they were bound only to the fasts observed by pious Christians, and might eat what was set in front of them.

The followers of St. Francis were first instituted into an Order in 1209 or 1210 by Pope Innocent III. This pontiff only took the step after considerable hesitation, as he was justifiably doubtful whether the experiment, for such it was, would have a permanently beneficial effect. The brethren were then known as the "Penitents of Assisi," and later as members of the Seraphic Order, Franciscans, Friars Minors or Minorites (as they claimed to be the youngest and humblest of the religious orders), and, in England, as Grey Friars from the colour of the habit they wore, which, now, however, is brown rather than grey. From their habitual cheerfulness they had earned the title of "Joculatores" or "Jongleurs of God." As will be seen, the original conception was altogether distinct from that of the monastic Benedictines or Canons Regular; it was, in fact, a confraternity rather than an order.

It may be well at this point to recall for a moment the great need of a section of the community, in the early thirteenth century, for spiritual and other services which were not provided by the regular clergy. At this time the poorer inhabitants of the towns were in a lamentable condition. Largely composed of serfs driven from the country by feudal oppression, and suffered to settle on the outskirts of the towns, they dragged out a wretched existence amid the most unhealthy and repulsive surroundings. Neglected alike by the monks and the secular priests (whose lives caused St. Bernard to exclaim "It is no longer true " that the priests are as bad as the people, for the priests " are worse than the people " <sup>5</sup>) it is little wonder that,

<sup>4</sup> *Enc. Brit.*, Art. *Franciscans*.

<sup>5</sup> *Monumenta Franciscana*, (Rolls Series), vol. i., p. xiii.



when St. Francis and his followers appealed to these unfortunate slum-dwellers, they so eagerly responded.

As a consequence of the religious upheaval thus brought about, large numbers, from the abbot and noble to the veriest vagabond, joined the new order, resulting in such an extension of the field of work that, about the year 1217, missions had spread to Germany, France, Spain, Hungary, and the Holy Land, and, as the original scheme became unworkable, the Friars Minors were constituted an Order in the technical sense of the word.

The Order came to England in 1224, that is, within fifteen years of the foundation, and immediately established headquarters in London, Canterbury and Oxford. By the middle of the century there were fifty friaries and over 1200 friars in this country. At the time of the Dissolution the number of houses had increased to sixty-six,<sup>6</sup> a few of which belonged to the strict section of the Observants, while the remainder, in which number the Chester house was included, belonged to the "middle party," who were allowed to possess property and a fixed income like other monastic bodies. The Order generally, however, appear to have practised great poverty, and the Commissioners of Henry VIII. often remark that the Franciscan friary was the poorest of the religious establishments of a town. The English province claims to have been one of the most remarkable of the order, especially in literary achievements, and to have produced Friar Bacon, and, with the single exception of St. Bonaventure, all the greatest doctors of the Franciscan theological school, including Alexander Hales, Duns Scotus, and Occam.<sup>7</sup>

The Order was, in a large measure, recruited from the poor, and has always been by far the largest of the religious brotherhoods. Their internal history has been of an extremely stormy character, but a local historian, with justice, remarks of the Chester house that "it is highly honourable to this body that the Friars Minor are not

<sup>6</sup> For a list see *The Catholic Dictionary*, and *English Monastic Life* by F. A. Gasquet.

<sup>7</sup> *Enc. Brit.*, Art. *Franciscans*.

“ presented ” in the records “ as having taken any part in  
 “ the riotous and disorderly proceedings which so disgraced  
 “ the members of the other two orders.”<sup>8</sup>

### 3.—FOUNDATION OF THE CHESTER FRIARY.

In a work devoted to the records of the English Grey Friars it is stated that no chartularies or registers of their houses have been preserved, if indeed they ever existed.<sup>9</sup> This is generally, if not altogether,<sup>10</sup> correct, as even the possession of parchment and writing materials was forbidden by St. Francis, who, with his earliest converts, was definitely opposed to learning, except in so far as it qualified them for the duties of the preacher and the missionary. In view of this, and the fact that poverty and meditation were given pre-eminence, it is not surprising that, unlike the monks, the Order did not possess historians, and that its progress can only be sketched by means of stray references to be found in public and private collections of manuscripts.

The date of the foundation of the Chester Friary has been assigned by historians to different periods. Speed places it in the reign of King John, but, as a later authority points out, that monarch was dead at the time the Order came to England.<sup>11</sup> The same later authority hazards a guess, based on Speed's statement, that the Chester convent had been built for some other religious body, perhaps aliens deported by Henry V., and that it was subsequently bestowed upon the Franciscans. Bishop Tanner, on the other hand, ventures an opinion that the house might be as ancient as the time of Henry III.,<sup>12</sup> and, as will be seen, this is correct.

Matthew Paris relates that in A.D. 1235 the Black and the Grey Friars had increased and prospered so considerably

<sup>8</sup> Morris, *Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Periods*, 145.

<sup>9</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, vol. i., p. lxi.

<sup>10</sup> See the *Register of the Friars Minors of London* (Cotton Library) printed in *Monumenta Franciscana*, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Parkinson, in *Collec. Anglo-Minoritica*, (1726), part II., 36, VI.

<sup>12</sup> *Notitia Monastica* (Original and Nasmyth's editions) Cheshire VII., Chester 10.

that they had become remarkable for their buildings, their large membership, and their many teachers (*literatorum*), as well as for their learning and preaching and monasteries of renown.<sup>13</sup> About this date the Chester friary was founded by the labours of Friar Albert of Pisa, then Provincial Minister, and afterwards Minister General of the Order.<sup>14</sup> Thomas de Eccleston in *The Coming of the Friars Minors* states that the settlement was only effected with great difficulty, and it is the subject of a letter written by Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, to Alexander de Stavensby,<sup>15</sup> bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (in which diocese Chester then was).

It is clear that Stavensby had been unfavourable to the settlement of the Grey Friars in Chester, and that he had been the means of creating a strong feeling in the city against the Order, ostensibly on the ground that the settlement was injurious to the interests of the Black Friars already there.<sup>16</sup> Probably the agitation was started by the Black Friars themselves, but the fact that a mendicant order could be successful in inducing the bishop of the diocese to fight for them is worthy of note. The new comers also had a powerful friend in the bishop of Lincoln, a man of exceptional attainments, who, in A.D. 1224, had been their first lector at Oxford, and to whose instruction so much of their power of speaking and teaching was attributed. Grosseteste, it is said, had been archdeacon of Chester.<sup>17</sup> He was a man of humble origin, and this, doubtless, increased his influence over the Grey Friars, for whom he retained affection to his death.

<sup>13</sup> (Rolls Series) ii., 384.

<sup>14</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, *op. cit.*, i., 54.

<sup>15</sup> Dugdale states that the Franciscan friary at Lichfield was founded by Alexander Gavensby [?Stavensby] (*Monast.*, vi., 1503).

<sup>16</sup> *Letters of Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln* (Rolls Series), p. 120.

<sup>17</sup> Ormerod's *History of Cheshire* (Helsby ed.), i., 114. But Canon Perry, in his *Student's English Church History*, i., 325, states that at the time of his election he was archdeacon of Leicester.

The letter, which is in Latin, and undated, is as follows:—<sup>18</sup>

“Venerabili in Christo fratri et amico carissimo Alexandro Dei gratia Coventriæ et Lichfeldiæ Episcopo,  
 “Robertus, miseratione divina Lincolnensis ecclesiæ  
 “minister humilis, salutem et sincerum in Domino  
 “fraternæ dilectionis affectum.

“Religionis sanctitas, religiosæque personæ, quam sint venerandæ atque ad imitandum proponendæ, multo melius quam nos vestræ novit fraternitatis discretio. Docuit enim vos efficacius tam religiosorum assidua familiaritas quam in vobismet ipsis sanctæ religionis jugiter experta veritas. Unde credibile non est, tantum sanctæ religionis amatorem, operisque factorem religiosi, religiosarum personarum existimationem religionisque earum honestatem in aliquo velle apud quosdam minuere.<sup>19</sup> Audivimus tamen a fide dignis, quod vos coram populo Cestriæ quibusdamque magnatibus quosdam de Fratribus Minoribus ita contumeliis affecistis, quod tam eorundem<sup>20</sup> personæ quam ordinis status in audientium odium in contemptum non immerito possent adduci, causamque hujus rei audivimus fuisse, quod ipsi Fratres Minores in civitate Cestriæ simul cum Fratribus Predicatoribus vellent cohabitare. Quod incredibile, si verum est, non ex anima vestri deliberatione, sed ex ejusdem aliqua subita commotione credimus processisse. Scit enim vestra discretio, quam utilis est populo, cum quo habitant, Fratrum Minorum præsentia et cohabitatio; cum tam verbo prædicationis quam exemplo sanctæ cælestisque conversationis et devotione jugis orationis continue et indefesse portent pacem et patriam illuminent, suppleantque in hac parte, pro magna parte defectum prælatorum. Si autem forte timuistis ad horam, quod Fratrum Minorum apud Cestriam præsentia Fratribus Prædicatoribus ibidem<sup>21</sup> degentibus<sup>21a</sup> obsesset, quasi utrisque<sup>22</sup> non foret sufficiens ad victum civium populi que eleemosyna; advertat diligentius vestra discretio, quam vana fuerit hujus timoris sollicitudo,<sup>23</sup> cum experientia compertum sit, quod utrorumque fratrum in eadem civitate cohabitatio neutris vergat in egestatem sed utrisque in abundantiam. Eleemosyna

<sup>18</sup> *Letters of Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, (Rolls Series).*  
 120.

<sup>19</sup> “quosquam minuere,” *C.C.C.*; “quosquam imminuere,” *Ox.*

<sup>20</sup> “eorum, *Sid.*

<sup>21</sup> “ibi,” *C.C.C.*

<sup>21a</sup> ? sedentibus

<sup>22</sup> “ultrisque,” *sic* in printed transcript.

<sup>23</sup> “surreptio,” *C.C.C.*



enim<sup>24</sup> est sicut fons vivus qui tanto copiosius fundit aquas, quanto uberius hauriuntur. 'Hæc est lecythus olei, qui non minuitur' (3 Reg. xvii., 14, 4 Reg. iv., 7), et oleum per Elysæum multiplicatum, quo viduæ filii liberantur. Nec mirum cum Ei in suis membris egenti tribuatur, qui simplicitatem materiæ multiplicavit in mundi molem et grani parvitatem multiplicavit in arboris magnitudinem, qui panes paucos multiplicavit in plurium milium satietatem, qui per se dives est et largus, plurium et majorum beneficiorum retributor quam sit acceptor. Cum igitur eleemosynarum largitio sit facultatum largientium copiosa multiplicatio, quomodo timeri potest quod accipientium eleemosynas augmentatio sit ipsis egestatis occasio qui imo sperari debet ex hoc majoris plenitudinis susceptio quia igitur dictorum Fratrum Minorum conversatio est<sup>25</sup> populi cum quo habitant ad agnoscendam<sup>26</sup> veritatem illuminatio, et ad currendum in viam pacis directio, tractus, stimulatio, et propulsio, defectuumque prælatorum sub quibus habitant non modica suppletio, aliisque pauperibus non egestatis, sed abundantiae occasio; non<sup>27</sup> potest verus amator boni ex animi deliberatione tantum bonum repellere, sed magis totis conatibus attrahere. Cum igitur in vobis semper abundaverit et abundet veri boni fervidus amor; speramus quod perhibita deliberatione, dictos fratres non solum non repellat vestræ sanctitatis discretio, sed desideranter sibi adsciscet in adiutorium, et<sup>28</sup> quantumcumque fieri poterit per civitates vestræ diœcesis multiplicabit, vano timore sublato, quod eorum multitudo sit aliis egestatis occasio."

A more or less free translation of this letter is given below:—

To our reverend brother in Christ and well beloved friend Alexander, by the grace of God, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Robert, by divine mercy humble minister of the Church of Lincoln, greeting etc.

Your discernment, my brother, recognizes far better than ours how much the sanctity of life under religious vows is to be revered and held up for imitation. For you have learned as much from constant association with religious men as from your own acquaintance with the truth of holy religion. Wherefore it is not credible that such a lover of our sacred faith and an author of religious work should

<sup>24</sup> omitted, *Sid.*

<sup>25</sup> omitted, *Ox.*

<sup>26</sup> "cognoscendam," *C.C.C., Ox.*

<sup>27</sup> "nec," *C.C.C., Sid.*

<sup>28</sup> omitted, *C.C.C., Ox.*

wish to belittle the reputation of religious people and the good fame of their profession in any degree. We have nevertheless heard, on good authority, that, in the presence of the people of Chester and certain dignitaries, you have so treated with insults some of the Friars Minors that their persons and the standing of their order cannot but be, undeservedly, brought into odium with those who heard you, and we understand that the reason of this is that the Friars Minors wish to dwell in the city of Chester in addition to the Friars Preachers. Which thing, incredible if it is true, we believe must have arisen not out of your reasoned judgment but from a sudden impulse. For a man of your discernment knows well how profitable the presence and cohabitation of the Friars Minors is to the people with whom they dwell, since, as well by preaching as by the example of sanctified and celestial life, and by devotion to unceasing prayer, they may be the means of bringing peace and enlightenment to their country, and supply in this respect, to a great degree, the defect of the higher order of ecclesiastics. If, however, by any chance, for the moment, you feared that the presence of the Friars Minors at Chester might become a source of injury to the Friars Preachers already dwelling there, just as though the alms of the citizens and other people would not be sufficient for the livelihood of both; your discernment must recognize very well how vain should be anxiety on this account, since experience has proved that the dwelling together of both orders of brothers in the same city has tended to the poverty of neither but rather to the abundance of each. For the practice of almsgiving resembles a living fountain which pours forth its waters more liberally the more plentifully they are drawn. It is the cruse of oil that does not fail (3 Kings, xvii. 14; 4 Kings, iv. 7), and the oil multiplied by Elisha, by which the sons of the widow were delivered. Nor is this wonderful, since it is given to Him, who is needy in His members, who has multiplied the simple element into the mass of a world, and the minute seed into the grandeur of a tree; who has increased a few loaves of bread to the satiety of many thousands, who is Himself rich and generous, and who is the bestower of many more and greater benefits than those of which He is the recipient.

Since therefore the gift of alms may be the means of a plentiful increase of the power of the givers, how is it possible to fear that an increase of persons who receive alms may be a cause of want to them, and not rather a beginning of a time of greater plenty; inasmuch as the life of the said Friars Minors is an enlightening power to assist their neighbours to

know the Truth, and an influence guiding them to run in the way of peace, a persuasive agent, a help, and a constraining force, and a, by no means small, supply of the deficiencies of the prelates under whom they live, and to other poor men a cause not of dearth but of abundance; (in consideration of which) the true lover of good cannot, on full deliberation, oppose so great a boon, but must rather welcome it to the utmost of his ability.

Since, therefore, vehement love of the true good has always abounded and doth abound in you, we hope that, after consideration, the wise discernment of your sanctity may not oppose the aforesaid brothers, but that it may eagerly adopt them as far as possible in the cities of your diocese; the needless fear having been removed that their number may be a cause of want to others.

Whether this appeal was successful in bringing about a cessation of the hostility to the settlement of the Grey Friars in Chester does not appear, but it may be inferred from the following order of the King that his intervention had to be obtained before the brotherhood were able to establish themselves permanently in the city, although, by this date, they had no doubt secured a considerable following and support.

" Henry, by the grace of God, King of England, etc., to his ' Custodes ' of the county of Chester, greeting : know that we are well pleased that the Friars Minors should build a house of their order in the town of Chester, and therefore we command you to help them in building it. Witness our hands at Westminster, this sixth day of February " [1240].<sup>29</sup>

Up to this time the Order had no common home in Chester, and they may be imagined as living from day to day on alms bestowed by the charitable, sleeping in whatever quarters offered, and travelling about with wallets slung from their shoulders, receptacles to which, as Chaucer graphically relates, few things came amiss.

It has been suggested that earl Randle Blundeville, who gave the friars at Coventry the ground upon which they erected a church, made a similar gift to the orders which settled in Chester,<sup>30</sup> but this cannot have been the case, so

<sup>29</sup> Close Roll 50 (*vide Calendar*).

<sup>30</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, 142.

far as the Grey Friars are concerned, as the earl died in 1232, a few years before they came to Chester.

The Grey Friars are said to have been in the habit of building their houses in the poorest quarters of a town and on the least valuable ground, and they settled in Chester on a piece of land, in Holy Trinity parish, left vacant by the great fire of A.D. 1180.<sup>31</sup> The site, although close to the busy Watergate Street, was in a poor and wasted quarter of the town, and accordingly met the usual conditions. Here the brothers set about building premises, including a church, which they dedicated in honour of their founder, St. Francis.<sup>32</sup>

In A.D. 1245 and the next year the work was still in progress, as evidenced by three grants of the King. On 11 Sep. 1245 Henry agreed to the removal of a certain lane, which the friars complained was very harmful to them and their buildings, provided that his compliance with their petition would not be injurious to the city. He accordingly ordered Robert de Mucegros, together with the mayor and twelve discreet citizens, to view the spot.<sup>33</sup>

On the same date, Henry gave the friars permission to take as much stone from the fosse of his Castle of Chester as they required to construct their new buildings, and he ordered his Constable to allow this to be done.<sup>33</sup>

The third grant is dated in the following spring, when the King ordered his justiciar, John de Grey, to allow the brethren to pierce the Wall of the city for the purpose of drawing in stone and wood for the construction of their church and houses.<sup>34</sup>

Although contrary to the rules of the Order, it appears clear that the friary was constructed of stone, and it may reasonably be assumed that the buildings were sufficiently advanced, in a comparatively short time, to become the local home and headquarters of the brothers.

<sup>31</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, 142.

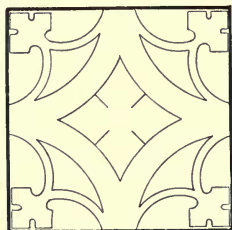
<sup>32</sup> Parkinson, *op. cit.*, part II., 36.

<sup>33</sup> Close Roll (*vide Calendar*).

<sup>34</sup> Close Roll (*vide Calendar*).



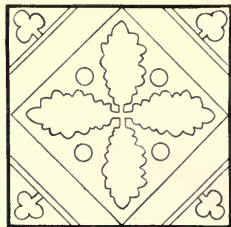




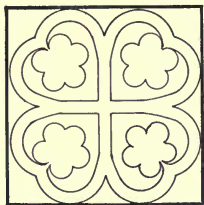
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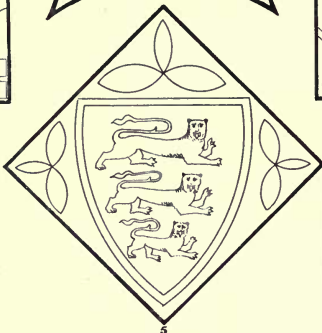
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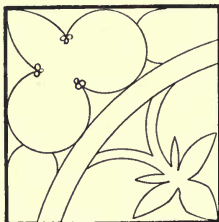
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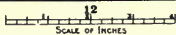
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SCALE OF INCHES

J.H.F.B., del

Complete tiles and restored fragments found at various times on site of Friary.

## 4.—HISTORY OF THE FRIARY.

From the middle of the thirteenth century until near its close there is no information respecting the Franciscan Friary at Chester, which, with eight others, was included in the custody of Worcester.<sup>35</sup>

On 1 Sep. 22 Ed. I. [1294] a writ was despatched from Worcester to Reginald de Grey, justiciar of Chester, commanding him to hold an enquiry respecting a sum of money which, it was alleged, had been wrongfully seized by the king's clerk. An inquest was held at Chester about three weeks later, on the Tuesday in the Feast of St. Matthew, the following being jurors—William the Tailor, Robert the Chamberlain, Jordan de Bradeford, Reginald de Don, William the Forester, David the Armorer, Roger de Moldeworth, Richard de Baruue, Richard son of David . . . , William de Troghford, etc. It was then found that, on the second day of the Feast of St. Agnes, 1298, John de Baruue, chaplain, was taken ill at Great Baruue, and there, on that day, before Hugh the reeve of Baruue, Thomas the son of William Forester, Richard the son of Adam the reeve, and Ralph de Baruue, chaplain, he gave to the Friars Minors of Chester all the money which he had on deposit in the house of the said friars, to provide a chaplain to celebrate for the salvation of his soul for ever, and to assist the said friars to discharge their debts and supply their necessities. The grantor appointed the aforesaid Ralph de Baruue his proctor to distribute the money to the uses detailed above, and committed to him its possession, and a chest in which it was deposited. And

<sup>35</sup> The other houses were Worcester, Coventry, Lichfield, Stafford. Preston, Shrewsbury, Llanfaes, and Bridgnorth. From the earliest times the Franciscan convents were grouped into custodies, each under a custodian who held office for a term of years, and whose functions were those of a local provincial minister and permanent visitor. The custodians of each province elected one of their number to represent them at the general chapter, and, it is probable, that all custodians were entitled to attend the provincial chapter. In each custody one convent had to be assigned for the training of novices, and candidates for degrees at the Universities were chosen from friars who had lectured at these schools. (*The Administrative Divisions of the Mendicant Orders in England*, by A. G. Little, *English Historical Review*, xxxiv.).

so the money remained in the custody of Ralph de Baruue until the Sunday after the Octave of St. John the Baptist, 22 Ed. I., when Master Gilbert de Arderne, the king's clerk, caused the money found in the chest to be seized, and afterwards despatched it to the Exchequer at Westminster. It was clearly shewn that the benefactor had given the money to the friars absolutely, insomuch that it should remain with them whether he lived or died.<sup>36</sup>

Accordingly, on 14 Oct. in the same year, the King, at Westminster, ordered his Treasurer and Chamberlains to cause to be delivered to the Friars Minors of Chester the sum of £33 10s. 0d. that the king's clerk, lately appointed to arrest money deposited in the town of Chester and elsewhere in that county, had caused to be arrested in their house, as the king had learnt by inquisition taken by his justiciar of Chester, that John de Baruue, chaplain, had given and assigned the money to the friars (long before it had been seized by his officer) to provide a chaplain to celebrate divine service there for his soul and to acquit the friars' debts.<sup>37</sup>

The reason for the seizure of money in Chester at this time may have been the serious Welsh insurrection under Madoc ap Llewelyn which was imminent, if it had not already broken out.

A gift to the Friars is mentioned in the following abstract of a deed ; undated, but of this period.

Hamo de Masey, Ralph de Vernun, Jo de Orreby, Hugh de Dutton, Richard de Masey, William Gerard, William Launcelyn and Roger Domuill undertook for themselves and their heirs to hold in trust for the abbot of Chester without waste £20 which the said Abbot undertook to pay to the Friars Preachers and Minors of Chester according to the will of John de Arnewey at the undermentioned terms, viz., in the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Mary, in the 21st year of King Edward's reign [1292-3] ten marks, and in the feast of St. Martin next following ten marks, and in the same feast of St. Martin in the succeeding year ten marks until the whole sum should be discharged.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> P.R.O., Chancery Inq. Misc., file 54 (42).

<sup>37</sup> P.R.O., Close Roll 111, m. 3. (*vide Cal.*).

<sup>38</sup> B.M. Harl. MS., 2072, f. 42b.

From the time the house was founded gifts would be continuously bestowed upon it, but little record of them remains save in the few extant wills of mediæval date. One early legacy is mentioned in the will of Thomas de Macclesfield, in 1301,<sup>39</sup> namely, "to the Friars Minors of Chester 40 shillings . . . The said legacies to the friars may be easily raised out of my goods and debts at Overton and English Maelor. And further I will that every friar minor and preacher shall have 20s. for his pittance when, in the Chapter General of England, my letters which I hold from their fraternities are shewn and my soul commended with masses and prayers." These "letters of confraternity," as they were called, or certificates, were sold by the Minorites and other friars and entitled a deceased person to the prayers of the brethren. It is asserted that bundles of these documents were shamelessly carried about and sold to any willing to find the purchase money, the name of the purchaser being filled in at the time. In two instances, however, the only ones noticed by the editor of the second volume of *Monumenta Franciscana*, they were evidently specially written on behalf of the individuals named.<sup>40</sup>

The unsettled period culminating in the execution of "the gentle Mortimer," the enforced retirement of the widow of Edward II., and the assumption of the reins of government by the young king, presumably dictated the policy of a petition from the Chester Franciscans to that monarch. The document is undated, but the handwriting is of the time of the third Edward, and the subject is clearly connected with the two ensuing records of 1331, although to address the king as "founder" either of the friary or city, while no doubt intended to please, seems a gross exaggeration of facts.

"To his . . . the King pray the poor chaplains the friars minors of Chester that he will be pleased, for their protection, to take their house in the said town, of which he is founder, into his hands, and also grant them letters patent

<sup>39</sup> *Lancashire and Cheshire Wills* (L. & C. Rec. Soc., xxx.), 1.

<sup>40</sup> Vol. ii., p. xxxi.



to make hand mills in their dwelling house and to grind corn and malt for their sustenance there or at other mills at their pleasure without hindrance by his ministers."<sup>41</sup>

On 14 Mar., 1331, the king, by privy seal, granted the latter part of the petition—a much valued concession in view of the then restrictions on grinding corn at other than the privileged mills. The following is an abstract of the grant :—

Edward, etc., to all his bailiffs and faithful servants to whom etc. : Know ye that of our especial grace we have granted (so far as in us lies), to our beloved in Christ, the warden and brothers of the Minors of our city of Chester, licence to make new hand mills within their manse, and to grind, at the said mills or other mills within or without the said city, corn and malt for the sustenance of the said brothers and convent without hurt or hindrance from us or our heirs or our bailiffs and ministers or any other. Witness our hand at Otteford, 14 Mar. etc.<sup>42</sup>

Four days later the King issued letters patent, at Eltham, granting the desired protection.<sup>43</sup> At the same time he took the Grey Friars of Ipswich under his protection.<sup>43</sup>

In the following year the Chester Friars wished to enlarge their dwelling house, and, on 20 Oct. 1332, letters patent were issued at York containing a licence for the alienation *in mortmain* by William de Brikhull, citizen of Chester,<sup>44</sup> and Cicely his wife, to the Prioress and Nuns of Chester, of a plot of land, 82 feet long by 72 feet broad, in exchange for a plot 103 feet long by 32 feet broad adjoining the dwelling house of the Friars Minors of Chester, and of the latter plot to the Warden and Friars Minors for the enlargement of their said dwelling house.<sup>45</sup>

By letters dated at Chester Castle, 10 Sep. 1353, the lord, *i.e.*, the Prince of Wales, as Earl of Chester, granted £6 13s. 4d. to the Friars Minors as alms, out of the issues of

<sup>41</sup> P.R.O., Ancient Petitions, file 194.

<sup>42</sup> P.R.O., Pat. Roll 175 (m. 22) (*vide Cal.*).

<sup>43</sup> P.R.O., Pat. Roll 175 (m. 31) (*vide Cal.*).

<sup>44</sup> Probably the mayor of Chester in 1329-31. He was also known as William Clerk, son of Peter de Brickhull.

<sup>45</sup> P.R.O., Pat. Roll 190 (*vide Cal.*). This land is not mentioned in *Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery, Chester* (Chester Arch. Soc., N.S. xiii.), 67 *et seq.* A few further particulars are given in P.R.O., *Inq. quod damnum* 223, No. 1., and the accompanying warrant.

the session of William de Shareshull and his fellow justices, etc., at Chester.<sup>46</sup>

Six years later the accounts for the county of Chester shew fifty shillings as having been paid on the authority of the lord's letters, dated 11 Jul. 1360, to the bailiff of the Hundred of Northwich, for "a book called a Bible" which had been carried away from the house of the Friars Minors of Chester without their licence, and which had come into the hands of the said bailiff as "wayf." The Chamberlain was instructed to deliver the book to the brethren as a gift and alms.<sup>47</sup>

In the same year permission was sought for a further enlargement of the house, indicated by the following extract from *Camerarius Cestrie* (P.R.O. Augm. Vol. 279).

Edward etc. to our well beloved John Blound mayor and escheator of our city of Chester, greeting. We order you to ascertain if it would be any injury etc. if we permitted Robert de Huxelee, parson of the church of Tatenhale, to grant to the warden and convent of the order of freres menoures of Chester for the enlargement of their house a messuage with appurtenances which the said Robert purchased of Robert Harald, in unconditional and perpetual alms. Dated 11 July, in the 34th year of our reign.

In 1361 Randle Whytlof, of Macclesfield, bequeathed two shillings to the Friars Minors of Chester.<sup>48</sup>

In 1366 another legacy, this time of thirty shillings and three pence, occurs in the will of Roger de Swetenham, of Somerford Booths.<sup>49</sup>

In 1384, Thomas del Fere, citizen of Chester, left three shillings and four pence to each Order of Friars in Chester.<sup>49</sup>

Nicholas d'Audley, lord of Rouge Chastell (Red Castle, co. Salop), and Helegh (co. Staff), by his will dated at his castle of Helegh, in 1391 bequeathed money to the Friars of Chester.<sup>50</sup>

The three Chester friaries and the one at Warrington were remembered in the will of Sir Lawrence Dutton,

<sup>46</sup> *Cheshire Chamberlains' Accounts* (L. & C. Rec. Soc., lix.), 216.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 274.

<sup>48</sup> *Lancs. & Ches. Wills, op. cit.*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Harl. MS. 2061.

<sup>50</sup> *Cal. of Wills at Court of Husting, London*, 294, 295.

which is dated 1392. The clause is as follows :—" I leave " to the four Orders of religious brethren of Chester and " Warrington, to each of their convents twenty shillings."<sup>51</sup>

The friars have been accused of exercising undue influence at deathbeds, as evidenced by the frequency with which they appear in wills as beneficiaries. On the other hand, it is claimed that their attention to the sick and dying was devoted, and in confirmation of this it is related that on account of this unselfish service the friars throughout Europe perished in thousands during the ravages of the " Black Death " in the fourteenth century.<sup>52</sup>

The next reference to the Chester Grey Friars occurs under date 30 June, 1392, when Richard II., from Nottingham, pardoned John Banastre and John Wistanston, friars minors of Chester, who had been indicted because they, with others of their " covin " and assent, had abstracted and carried away from the house of one Thomas de Moston, deceased, approver of the King's Mills of Dee, gold and silver goods and chattels to the value of one hundred pounds, and had concealed them. Moston had died much indebted in respect of his office to the king, and it is evident that the friars, fearing lest the demands of the monarch should swallow up legacies left to them or their community, took steps which they trusted would prevent such a contingency. The culprits had, however, been convicted and committed to prison, until they should pay as much as the said Thomas owed to the king, of the said sum. Richard, in addition to pardoning the friars, graciously yielded claim of all that pertained to him on account of the indictment and judgment, provided that no one else, by virtue of the pardon, was discharged of the debt.<sup>53</sup>

In 1399 the ill-fated Richard went to meet his successful rival, Henry Bolingbroke, at Flint, clothed in the garb of a grey friar, and it has been asserted that the Order was,

<sup>51</sup> Ormerod (2nd ed.), i., 349, quoting Tabley MSS., C. 159. Hemingway, *op. cit.* ii., 147, erroneously gives the testator's name as " Robert."

<sup>52</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, *op. cit.*, ii., xxxiv.

<sup>53</sup> P.R.O.. Pat. Roll 335 (*vide Cal.*).

without exception, devoted to the cause of the deposed monarch, and afterwards to the Yorkist party.<sup>54</sup> The sentiment is illustrated by the support afforded by the Franciscans to the insurrection of Owen Glendower, which resulted in the sack of their priory at Llanfaes, in Anglesey, by Henry, the slaughter of some of the friars, and the institution of adherents of his own in their place.<sup>55</sup> There is no doubt that the order had been particularly favoured by the later Plantagenet kings; the patent rolls recording no less than 112 grants made to them between the time of their arrival in England and the deposition of Richard II., whereas only three grants were made during the reign of Henry IV.<sup>56</sup>

The new king was greatly troubled in 1402 by the assiduity with which the Friars Minors spread the report that Richard had not died in Pontefract, but was alive and in Scotland, and for this he caused several of the friars to be hanged.<sup>57</sup> There is, however, no evidence that the Grey Friars of Chester suffered on account of allegiance to Richard, and, in any case, the following petition, made a few years later, and its sequel, denote that the house was not in disfavour, although the grant may have been dictated by the conciliatory policy of Henry.

“Petition of the Warden and Convent of the Friars Minors of Chester.

May it please our most excellent lord the prince of his particular grace to his poor mendicant bedesmen and chaplains, William Seggesley,<sup>58</sup> warden of the Friars Minors of Chester, and the Convent of the same, to permit William Tewkesbury, chaplain, to grant to Roger [le] Potter, mayor of the city of Chester, and his successors for ever [in trust for the said warden and convent and their successors] an annual rent of ten shillings issuing out of three messuages which the said William Tewkesbury holds of the gift and feoffment of John [le] Chamberlein [a citizen] of Chester [now deceased],

<sup>54</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, *op. cit.*, ii., xxxv.

<sup>55</sup> *Cheshire Sheaf* (1st S.), iii., 251.

<sup>56</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, *op. cit.*, ii., xxxvi.

<sup>57</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, *op. cit.*, ii., xxxvii.

<sup>58</sup> This name appears to be Seggesley and not Leggesley as given in the *Calendar*.

two of which are situated in the Baxterrowe<sup>59</sup> in Estgatestrete in the said city, one between the land of Henry Russell and the land of Richard [le] Bruyn on one side and the land of John Stokes of Rothelan and the land late of Agnes de Werthynton on the other side and in length from the land of the aforesaid John [le] Chamberlein as far as the churchyard of Seint Werbur of Chester. And the other messuage lying in the aforesaid Baxterrowe, in width between the land of the aforesaid John [le] Chamberlein on one side and the land of John Harrysone [Henrysone] le Bruyn and the land of Otes de Worthynton on the other side, and in length from the land of Robert Coly as far as the bakehouse which Thomas Sole [Soule] baxter now holds. And the third messuage lying in Bruggestrete of the said city in width between the high street called Bruggestrete on one side and the way which extends to the gate called Capelyate<sup>60</sup> on the other side, and in length from the aforesaid highway as far as the wall of the gate of the aforesaid Bruggestrete. The said rent of ten shillings to be payable each year at the four terms of the year usual in the said city. So that if the rent of ten shillings shall be in arrear in part or altogether it shall be lawful for the said mayor and his successors, to enter into the messuages or parcel of them to distrain and retain sufficient to cover the said rent and any arrears, on behalf of the said warden and convent. On condition that the said Warden and Convent and their successors in perpetuity perform two obits in the church of the Friars Minors of Chester, to wit, one on the Feast of Seint Katherine the Virgin with dirige and nine lessons with note and on the morrow a solemn mass of requiem with note, or within two days of the said feast before or after, and the other obit in similar form on the Feast of Seint Margaret the Virgin, for the souls of the aforesaid John

<sup>59</sup> On the north side of Eastgate Street. This property was in the neighbourhood of Godstall Lane.

<sup>60</sup> This, as the name implies, was the Horse Gate, by which animals were taken down to the river for water. It is mentioned in an inquisition of 1320/1 (Dues taken at City Gates, Morris 557). In 1349/50 Robert de Raby held the custody of this ("porta Equorum") as well as of the adjoining Bridge and Ship Gates (Orm. 2 ed., ii., 547). Dr. Bridge (in his *Cheshire Proverbs*, p. 85) remarks that "it must be remembered that there was no large water supply in the city and that a constant stream of horses being taken to the Dee to be watered would interfere with the traffic of the . . . Bridge Gate." The animals were therefore conducted to the special gate by way of Capel Lane. The gate was at the water level a few yards to the east side of the Bridge Gate, and is shewn in three views of the south aspect of Chester, reproduced in Morris' history, i.e., Braun's map 1572-1618 (juxta 528), Randle Holme's sketch (Harl. MS. 2073) (229), and Edw. Wright's (juxta 512).



[1e] Chamberleyn and Agnes his wife parents of Robert [1e] Chamberleyn son and heir of the said John, and for the souls of that same Robert [1e] Chamberleyn and his heirs after their death. And, if it should happen that the said Warden and Convent or their successors should be distrained or impleaded by the aforesaid Robert or his heirs or any other in their name, in connection with a certain annual rent of five shillings which the said Robert hitherto claimed as issuing out of lands [and tenements now belonging to the said brothers] which had belonged to Robert de Macclesfield and which rent Robert [1e] Chamberleyn had released to the said warden and convent and their successors for ever on condition that the said warden and convent and their successors perform the said obits and masses in manner as is aforesaid, that then the annual rent of ten shillings should be confirmed.<sup>61</sup> Petitioners ask this for God's sake and as a work of charity.'<sup>62</sup>

It will be noticed that in accordance with the usual practice of the Franciscans the rent was to be granted to the mayor in trust. This was, of course, to comply with the rule of the Order prohibiting the acquisition of property.

The above petition is not dated, but warrants to hold inquisitions *ad quod damnum* were issued by the prince; one to Roger Potter, the mayor, who was also his escheator, dated 7 May in the fourth year of the king's reign, and the other to "lonn<sup>r</sup>able pere en dieu" John, bishop of St. Asaph, chamberlain of Chester, dated at Salop, 13 May, in the fourth year of his sovereignty, instructing his officers to ascertain whether the granting of the petition would be prejudicial to any of the interests of the earldom or other property. The finding was that no such risk arose, and on 8 July letters patent, dated at Chester, were issued by Henry, firstborn son of the illustrious king of England and France, prince of Wales, duke of Aquitaine, Lancaster and Cornwall, earl of Chester, who, of his special grace to his "beloved in Christ, William Seggesley warden of the "Friars Minors of our City of Chester and the Convent of "the same place" granting their petition with freedom from molestation.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> This seems to infer a security for the 5s. rent by giving a right to 10s. if the former should be disputed.

<sup>62</sup> P.R.O., Ches. Recog. Roll 2.76.

Commencing with the fifteenth century, more wills are to be found, and from this time until the Dissolution records of bequests to the friars are of frequent occurrence. Thus, in 1408, Robert Schot left two shillings and sixpence to the Friars Minors of Chester,<sup>63</sup> and, in 1413, John Coly bequeathed a torch and a candle of wax, half of his cloak of green worsted to make a chasuble and ten shillings to celebrate four trentals and a mass "*cum nota cum exequiis mortuorum*" for his soul.<sup>64</sup> John Dedwode also left six shillings and eight pence.<sup>65</sup> Richard Fyton, 20 Feb. 1436/7, left to each order of the friars in Chester 6s. 8d.<sup>66</sup>

Another bequest, about this time, occurs in the will of John Hope, citizen of Chester, dated 1438/9, who left six shillings and eight pence to the Friars Minors to pray for his soul, the souls of his parents, the soul of Rebecca Hope his sister, and the souls of all saints.<sup>67</sup>

On 12 June, 1439, at St. Mary Ottery, an *inspeximus* of the letters patent of 14 Mar., 1331, was issued by the king on the advice of his Council, and the privileges indicated in the former grant to the Friars Minors were ratified, approved and confirmed. The preamble is as follows:—

"The king, etc., to all to whom, etc., greeting. We have inspected the letters patent of the lord Edward late king of England, our ancestor, couched in these words. Edward, by the grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, and Duke of Aquitaine, to all his bailiffs and faithful subjects to whom these present letters shall come, greeting."

Then follows the text of the previous grant, and the confirmation.<sup>68</sup>

In the year 1460 the Grey Friars were prominent in support of the Yorkist cause,<sup>69</sup> but it is to be lamented that by this date the typical friar had lost most if not all of his original simple aims, and that he consorted with the rich, and tendered advice to the King-maker himself.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Harl. MS. 2061.

<sup>64</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, 350.

<sup>65</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, 143.

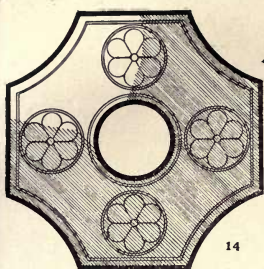
<sup>66</sup> P.C.C. 21 Luffenham.

<sup>67</sup> P.C.C. 25 Luffenham.

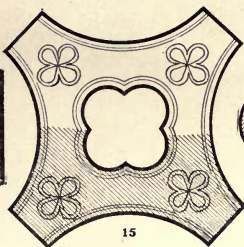
<sup>68</sup> P.R.O., Pat. Roll 444.

<sup>69</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, ii., xxxvii.

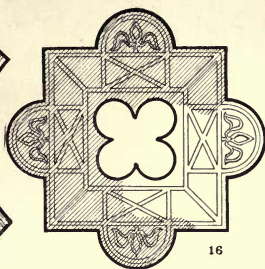
<sup>70</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, ii., xl.



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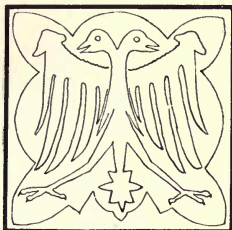
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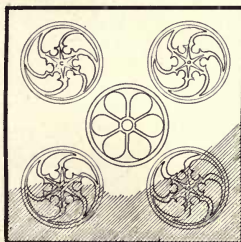
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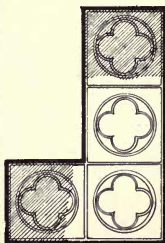
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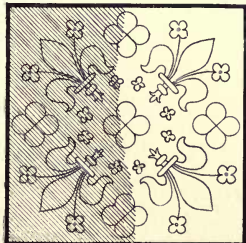
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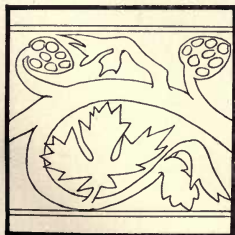
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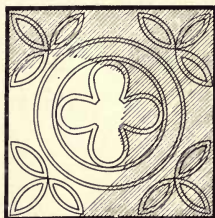
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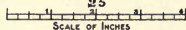
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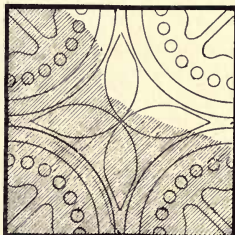
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SCALE OF INCHES



26

*J.H.E.B., del.*

Complete tiles and restored fragments found at various times on site of Friary.





The records of the next fifty years or so include the following testamentary gifts :—

1466-7, Mar. 7. Dame Cecill, of Torbok, lady of Torbock, left to the "grey friars of Chester vjs viij<sup>d</sup>." <sup>71</sup>

1488-9. Richard Cholmondeley, the younger, bequeathed to the "grey freris of Chester vjs viij<sup>d</sup>." <sup>72</sup>

1492, Aug. 6. John Croft, by his will dated at Ormskirk, left among other bequests 20s. to Lawrence Browne, of the Friars Minors of Chester "to celebrate for the health of my "soul." <sup>73</sup>

1494, May 16. John Hankey, of Aldford, left "to each of "the orders of friars of Chester xx<sup>d</sup>." <sup>74</sup>

1496-7, Feb. 22. Matthew Johnson alias Hewster, citizen of Chester, "in peril of death" left "to the three orders of "friars of the said city iij<sup>s</sup> "to be equally divided among them." <sup>75</sup>

1505, May 14. Henry Rayneforde, priest, directed "that "every fryers howse of Chester have one of my . . . [six] "torches if my executors can so accorde with them that have "right and title to the same and redeme them with other "recompenses. Also I will that every howse of the fryers of "the said citie have iij<sup>s</sup> iiij<sup>d</sup>. And every fryer being a "preest that be at my dirige and masse to have to his propre "vse iiij<sup>d</sup>." Testator left the reversion of "my crymsyn "gowne and hoode and furre . . . to make a cope there- "of . . . to the grey fryers so that it be made within a "monthe." <sup>76</sup>

1505, Jul. 23. Ralph Davenport, citizen and alderman of Chester, left two torches "to any of the orders of friars with- "in the said city . . . I leave to any of the orders of "friars within the said city and to every of them ten "shillings to celebrate a trental for the salvation of my soul "immediately after my death." <sup>77</sup>

1508, Feb. 20. William Egerton, of Hampton, gentleman, bequeathed "to the three freers in Chester to praye for my "wif and me and ycheon of theym to say a trentall xxx<sup>s</sup> "amonges theym." <sup>78</sup>

1511, Dec. 23. Thomas Roncorne, left "to the three houses "of freres every place vjs viij<sup>d</sup>." <sup>79</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Harl. MS. 2176, f. 27 etc.

<sup>72</sup> *L. & C. Wills* (Chetham Soc., 1st S., liv.), 41.

<sup>73</sup> *Sheaf* (3rd S.), vi., 85.

<sup>74</sup> P.C.C. 13 Horne.

<sup>77</sup> P.C.C. 16 Adeane.

<sup>75</sup> P.C.C. 35 Horne.

<sup>78</sup> P.C.C. 3 Fetiplace.

<sup>76</sup> P.C.C. 14 Adeane.

<sup>79</sup> P.C.C. 6 Fetiplace.



1514, Apr. 28. Rafe Huxley [? of Tattenhall], left to the "grey freers of Chester x<sup>s</sup> od."<sup>80</sup>

1518. Aug. 24. Nicholas Deykyn, of Chester, feltcapper, left "to every of the iij orders of freers for iij trentalls of "masses . . ."<sup>81</sup>

1519, Apr. 17. William Rogerson, of Chester, alderman, left "to every of iij orders of freris x<sup>s</sup>."<sup>82</sup>

1520, Dec. 4. Margaret Hawarden, of Chester, left "to the "repacon of the church of the Grey Freris vjs viij<sup>d</sup> and a little "vessell of ledde at the oversight of the warden and myne "executors."<sup>83</sup>

1527, Aug. 30. Thomas Sparke, doctor of canon law, bequeathed "to the three orders of freris x<sup>s</sup>, that is to every "howse iij<sup>s</sup> iiij<sup>d</sup> to the repacon of there howses."<sup>84</sup>

1527-8, Mar 23. Elizabeth Hurleston, of Chester, widow, bequeathed "to the graye frers vjs viij<sup>d</sup>."<sup>85</sup>

1530, Oct. 20. Thomas Croughton, of Chester, paynter, bequeathed "to sanct ffran[cis] w'thin ye gray freis a taper of "wax."<sup>86</sup> This will was proved at St. John's before William Wall, the last warden of the Chester Franciscan Friary.

1531, May 17. Ralph Lawton, rector of Bebington, gave "to the iij orders of freris at Chester to be evenly distribute "amonges theyr iij howses iiij<sup>os</sup> for to have theyr praers for "the welth of my soule and all cristen soules."<sup>87</sup>

1535, Dec. 25. Thomas Myddleton, of Chester, alderman, willed "that every order of the ffriers of Chester have x<sup>s</sup>."<sup>88</sup>

It will be noticed that during the preceding century little, beyond the records of more or less trivial legacies, has transpired respecting the history of the Friary, and it is more than probable that for the greater part of that period, as in the case of other brotherhoods, the influence and prosperity of the Grey Friars of Chester were on the decline, and that the upkeep of the establishment became more and more difficult. Certain it is that by 1528 the necessities of the house had become so great that the friars had been compelled to grant to the merchants and sailors

<sup>80</sup> Harl. MS. 2079. f. 161a.

<sup>81</sup> P.C.C. 11. Ayloffe.

<sup>82</sup> P.C.C. 17 Ayloffe.

<sup>83</sup> *L. & C. Wills* (Chet. Soc., 1st S., li.), 7.

<sup>84</sup> *L. & C. Wills* (Chet. Soc., 1st S., xxxiii.), 17.

<sup>85</sup> *L. & C. Wills* (Chet. Soc., 1st S., xxxiii.), 36.

<sup>86</sup> *Cheshire Sheaf* (1st S.), i., 55. Also Chet. Soc. (1st S.), xxxiii., 8.

<sup>87</sup> *L. & C. Wills* (Chet. Soc., 1st S., li.), 183.

<sup>88</sup> P.C.C. 32 Hogan.

of Chester the nave and three aisles of their great church for the stowage of sails and other articles. In addition to poverty, this points to negligible congregations. It will be noticed that the friars speak of the grantees as the builders of the premises leased to them. The charter, which is in Latin, and in the possession of the Chester Corporation, bears an impression of the seal of the house in yellow wax, and a translation of it is as follows :—

“ To all the faithful in Christ who shall see or hear this  
 “ present writing, we, William, warden of the Friars Minors  
 “ of Chester and the convent of the same, send greeting in the  
 “ Lord. Know that we, the said warden and convent, have  
 “ given, granted, and, by this present writing, confirmed to  
 “ the merchants and sailors of the City of Chester the nave  
 “ of our church which they have built together with three  
 “ aisles of the same church to the uninterrupted use of the  
 “ aforesaid merchants and sailors for the stowage of sails and  
 “ other necessities connected with the fitting and repairing of  
 “ their ships as often as may be necessary as they have hither-  
 “ to been accustomed. On condition that the said merchants  
 “ and sailors carry out the repairs of the said church and its  
 “ aisles at their own cost. In witness whereof, we, the  
 “ aforesaid warden and convent, have caused our common seal  
 “ to be affixed to this present writing. Given in our chapter  
 “ house this thirteenth day of July in the twentieth year of  
 “ the reign of Henry the eighth.”<sup>89</sup>

### 5.—THE DISSOLUTION.

The commencement of the suppression of native religious houses occurred in A.D 1525, when “ some mean monasteries ” were dissolved on the initiative of Wolsey himself for the purpose of founding two colleges. In 1528 and 1529 other suppressions for similar purposes were carried out, but so far all were broken up with papal approval and on the authority of pontifical bulls. In 1535-6, however, the supremacy of Rome had been thrown off, and an Act was then passed authorising the dissolution of all religious houses with incomes of less than £200, and, in the following year, 1537, the suppression of the remaining monasteries was determined.

<sup>89</sup> Charter 32 (*vide* Morris, *op. cit.* 143).

It is not likely that the Franciscan friary at Chester had at any time a large establishment of brothers, and, at the Dissolution, there appear to have been only seven. Parkinson, in his valuable collection of material respecting the Order, states that "the house had the title of St. Francis bestowed upon it, but that it possessed no lands or "revenues," that is, of course, beyond the precincts of the convent itself.<sup>90</sup> It would, consequently, be quickly disposed of by the king's visitor, Dr. Richard Ingworth, suffragan bishop of Dover, and sometime prior of the Black Friars of Rowley Regis, who had been specially appointed by the king to visit the houses of the mendicant orders.

In an undated report made by Ingworth to Thomas Cromwell, the former details a proposed itinerary starting from "Bristol . . . to Schrewisbery, and so to Denbith and to Bangar, and so to Westchester and to Lancaster," etc. He adds that he had had inventories made at all the houses visited and that he had "selyed up their common sealys so that thei shall sell or alienate nomore of their jewellys nor other stuffe, wherfor I am suar that within a yere the more parte shall be fayne to giffe up their howseis for poverty."<sup>91</sup> In another report, dated from Shrewsbury, 13 Aug.,<sup>92</sup> Ingworth says "I ryde thys day toward Westchester and so into Walys."<sup>93</sup>

On the 15 Aug., 1538, the "visytor under ye Lord Presydente for the King's Grace, was in Chester whereyt in presens of Master Phoke à Dutton, meyar ther, Roberte Aldersey, Henry Gee, Raffe Rogerson, Raffe Goodeman, Wm. Beswyke, aldermen of ye citie, with Thomas Marten, late schrewe" [sheriff], he entered "all the howseys of freers within ye said cete, wher that the hedys of all ye seyde howseys with all their brederyne gaffe ther howseys with all ye pertenens in to ye seyde vysytor's handds to the Kyng's use, without any co'sell or constreyning but

<sup>90</sup> *Coll. Angl. Min., op. cit.*

<sup>91</sup> *Letters relating to Suppression of Monasteries* (Camden Soc., xxvi.), 202.

<sup>92</sup> The year is not given.

<sup>93</sup> *Letters relating to Suppression of Monasteries (op. cit.), 205.*

“ very pou’te constreyned them. Thus, ye seyð visytor  
 “ receyved the howseys and made inventory of eche howse  
 “ and delyvered them with ye howseys and stuff in to ye  
 “ meyers hands and his assyngs, and gaffe every freer hys  
 “ letter to departe, and payd hes owyn charges and so de-  
 “ parted, thys wyttenes me ye seyð meyar with oder under  
 “ wrytyn,” etc.<sup>94</sup>

The formal surrender of the Chester friaries is endorsed  
 “ a voluntary resaiacio [resignation] of divers p’or [?poor]  
 “ houses,”<sup>95</sup> and the particular document relating to the  
 Franciscan house is worded as follows :—

“ Md. thys xv day of August In th xxxth yere of kynge  
 “ henry the viijth whe the wardyn an cōnete [convent] of the  
 “ graye fryers In West Chester wtout any coaccyon [compul-  
 “ sion] or cōsell [counsel] but for very pou’te [poverty] have  
 “ and doe resyne owr howse wt all yt to yt be longe In to ye  
 “ handds of the lord vysytor to the kyngs vse beseynge  
 “ [beseeching] hys grace to be goode and gracyous to vs In  
 “ wytenes to thys byll whe subscribe owr namys wt owr pro-  
 “ per handds the day and yere before wryten

“ per me Fratrē Willm Wall

“ per me Fratrē John Wynne [or Thomas Wryne]<sup>96</sup>

“ per me Rodulph Norres<sup>96</sup>

“ per me Jo. Jote<sup>96</sup>

“ per me Thomas Trushel<sup>96</sup>

“ per me Will’m Dycvnsen

“ per me Edwarde Goodman ”

The brevity of the document and the simplicity of the  
 language in which it is drawn up are calculated to waken  
 the sympathy of the reader with the unfortunate brethren  
 in their dire straits. The unconditional surrender for  
 “ very poverty ” and the humble plea for consideration  
 have a very submissive and distressed note, but, it must be  
 pointed out, the form employed was usual in the cases where  
 establishments bowed to the will of the king. Not un-  
 naturally, in this instance as in many others, the friars

<sup>94</sup> Morris, 149, quoting Chapter house A., 3-11 ff. 7-9.

<sup>95</sup> P.R.O. Exchequer T.R. Misc. Books, vol. 153, pp. 7-10 (*vide Cal.*).

<sup>96</sup> Morris, 145 and 150, gives the names of these four friars as  
 “ John Brynnall or Ihoan Bynnal, Radcliffe Norres or Radliyfe Norees,  
 John Rote or Io. Roti, and Thomas Trethil.” The signatures are not  
 very legible, but the present reading is probably more accurate.

appear to have made an attempt to rescue something of their property out of the general wreck, as indicated by the remark "ther be owte dyvers leasys the whyche the vysytar " wolde nott allowe because ther was craft in them & ware " made off late."<sup>97</sup>

The inventory of the contents of the church and convent<sup>98</sup> gives an interesting list of furniture, vestments, and household utensils, as well as of a few articles of plate, and mention is made of three leases, doubtless those to which there has already been reference, one of which resulted in a lawsuit between the successors of the friars. The document is headed :—

" The graye fryers of Chestre d[elivere]d to mast' phoke  
" dutton meyar thereto mast' raffe rog'son aldermā & thomas  
" marten "

and mentions the Choir, Vestry, Kitchen, Brew House, Buttery, and Bulting House. The articles in these places are given in full later. To the document appended (in the same hand as the text) are the names of the three citizens whose names appear above, and it concludes with these notes :—

" The vysytor hathe a lytyll chales a lytyll maser and vj  
" sponys to ye kyngs vse.

" Dd wt thys Invētory a byll of detts as ye wardeyn sethe—  
" xijli viijs xjd and iij leseys."

Of lead, which formed no inconsiderable part of the king's plunder, " the grey freres in Westchester," as well as a number of similar houses, provided but little, as a note in the handwriting of the Earl of Derby records that " only some of them had small gutt's."<sup>99</sup> Indeed, the inventory which has just been partially quoted is endorsed by the Bishop of Dover as follows :—" Nou led nor rentts but ye gerdens." The following inventory and account also shew that the house did not yield rich booty :—

" The Grey Freres off Chester. This indenture maketh  
" mentyon of ye Kynge's house in Chester, late the Grey  
" Frers, ys receyved by ye handes of Richarde, Byschope

<sup>97</sup> Pub. Lib., Bebington. Mayer MS., No. 54 (*vide* Morris, 144).

<sup>98</sup> P.R.O. S.P. Henry VIII. §133, 255-60 (*vide* Cal.).

<sup>99</sup> P.R.O. Exchequer T.R. Misc. Books, vol. 153, pp. 4-6 (*vide* Cal.).



" Suffraghan of Douar, and vysytar vnder the Lorde Prevy  
 " Seale for the Kynges grace, and the same delyv'yd in the  
 " pynances to Rycharde Howghe gentylma' to save and kepe  
 " to the Kynges vse tyll hys graces pleasure be further  
 " knowyn.

" The quere an olde ruffe slated.

" The steple a sharpe spyar, lytyll lede, wt ij belles in ytt.

" The churche slated.

" The northe yle ledyde in certen longe spoutes descendynge  
 " to a pane of the cloyster lede into gutters of lede.

" The southe yle ledyd, wt a crosse yle on the same syde  
 " ledyde, and certen gutters of lede.

" The reste of all the houses slated & styll lefte wt dores,  
 " gates & all others as before the vysytars comynge they  
 " ware, excepte suche as here dothe followe, the wyche by the  
 " vysytar was solde to paye dettes.

" All the stuffe of ye vestre and churche, wt the kytchyn &  
 " oder offyces by p'celles preysed and solde for iij<sup>li</sup> iiij<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup>.

" All the pore tables of ye awters in the quere & churche wt  
 " the pachemēte & glasse, wt the yron in the same quere and  
 " churche solde for xlvj<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup>.

" For a pore payer of orgeyns iij<sup>s</sup> iiij<sup>d</sup>.

" For the cellys & pt clossys in the dorter and cellehouse xs.

" The holle summe of the recytes ys vj<sup>li</sup> iiij<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup>.

" For the wyche payde of the dettes xij<sup>li</sup> viij<sup>s</sup> xj<sup>d</sup>.

" So ye vysytar hathe payde aboue the receytes vj<sup>li</sup> iiij<sup>s</sup> iij<sup>d</sup>.

" And he hathe in syluer to the Kynges vse a lytell chalys,  
 " a bonde of a lytyll maser, and vj small spones.

" The evydens reste in the vysytar's handes.

" Ytt ys to be notyd yt therbe owte dyvers leasys the wyche  
 " the vysytar wolde nott allowe because ther was crafte in  
 " them & ware made off late, and sore shulde be to the dis-  
 " comodyte of hym yt shulde have ye house.

" The vysytar's costes xvijs.

" Richard Doveren'."<sup>100</sup>

Writing from Ludlow, on 23 Aug., 1588, to Cromwell, Ingworth expresses a hope of shortly making a full report, and he gives particulars of a devastating tour of thirteen priories, including the one at Chester, of which he had left but a single house standing. Ingworth trusts Cromwell will be " a good lord for the warrants for such friars as give  
 " up their houses." In another letter of the same date, he

<sup>100</sup> Mayer MS. No. 54. The whole of the papers in this Collection referring to the Chester friaries were carefully copied, and amend in some particulars what is printed in Morris, 144, etc.

tells Latimer that he has visited eighteen houses and left but one standing. The houses were in Cheshire, Shropshire, and North Wales, and the visitor remarks at the end of his epistle, "the friars in these parts, where I have been, have many favourers, and great labour is made for their continuance. Divers trust to see them set up again and some have gone up to sue for them."<sup>101</sup>

So ends the connection of the Grey Friars with their Chester home.<sup>102</sup> It is true that much reformation was needed in the friaries as in the other religious settlements, but "the destruction of so many hallowed and beautiful buildings, . . . the secularising of so many sacred sepulchres, cannot be thought of without regret. The contents of the houses were sold almost without reserve, and the sites granted or sold to laymen."<sup>103</sup> As to the petition of the brethren to the king to be good and gracious, this was, in most instances, made in vain." It is said that: "only one or two were granted any pension for their support. As a rule, a few shillings were delivered to each one on being turned out into the world to find their own living as best they might." Canon Morris continues: "This was not easy. The bishops were no lovers of the wandering friars, and the destruction of so many churches diminished the possibility of obtaining any cure of souls, even had the bishops been willing to present them to any."<sup>104</sup> [This statement as to the attitude of the bishops should be somewhat modified. It was true up to a certain point, as the bishops naturally found religious orders exempt from their jurisdiction an embarrassment, especially when they lived a life which brought them into contact with the people of the diocese. At the same time, the orders of friars supplied a considerable number of bishops, especially to the less wealthy sees; and the

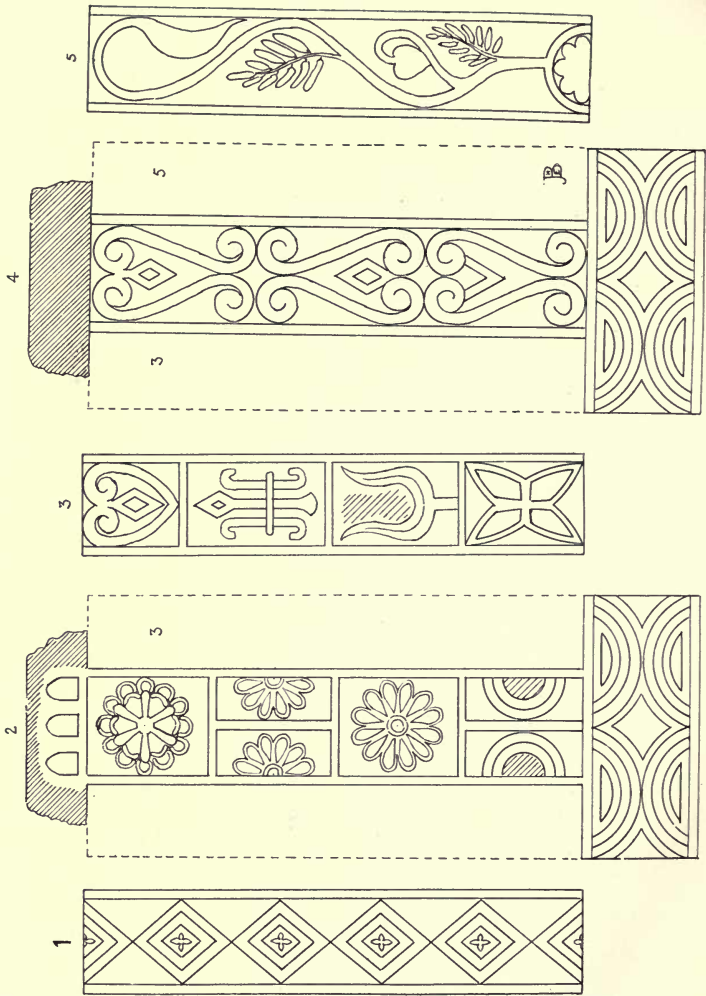
<sup>101</sup> *Cal. Letters and Papers of Reign of Henry viii.*, vol. xiii., part 2, (1538), pp. 169, 170.

<sup>102</sup> In Harl. MS. 2125, f. 272, there is a note from a Chester Corporation record that in 33 Hen. viii. [1541-2] the Friars Minors are mentioned in an indictment respecting gorse.

<sup>103</sup> *Vide* Morris, *op. cit.*, 149

<sup>104</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, 150.





Designs in relief on five side of a small octagonal pillar on square base, supposed to have been found within the precincts of the Friary (the remaining sides are not decorated).

(Quarter Actual Size.)

suffragan bishops who, with titular sees *in partibus* or with Irish ones which brought in no revenue, did much of the work in English dioceses during the later middle ages, were very often friars. Also, in appointing diocesan penitenciers, bishops frequently selected friars—there are many examples of this in the diocese of York.—A.H.T.] At Chester the warden, William Wall, was fortunate, and so, possibly, was the friar John Jote, but the subsequent career of the remainder, if indeed they had any which might be so termed, has yet to be discovered.

A revival of the brotherhoods became possible, and was attempted in 1553 with the accession of Queen Mary, but little national interest attaches to this short-lived effort, and Elizabeth, early in her reign, expelled the Minorites from this country.<sup>105</sup>

#### 6.—THE DISPOSAL OF THE SPOIL.

The friars having been evicted and the premises stripped, the empty shell of the “Kynge’s house in Chester, “late the Grey Frers . . .” with its appurtenances was delivered “by ye handes of Richarde, Byschope Suffraghan of Dover and Vysytar vnder the Lorde Prevy Seale “for the Kynge’s grace to Rycharde Howghe gentylman “to save and kepe to the Kynge’s Vse tyll hys graces “pleasure be further known.”<sup>106</sup>

Hough<sup>107</sup> was a local man and a connection of Thomas Cromwell, and he appears to have secured a lease of the Grey Friars for twenty-one years, as evidenced by the following abstract of a draft or copy of the instrument:—

Indenture whereby the King, by his Court of Augmentations, grants in fee farm to Richard Hough, gent., the site of the house late belonging to the Friars Minors commonly called “les gray freres” within the city of Chester lately dissolved, and all the land and soil of the church and the houses, chambers, buildings, gardens, lands and soil, with the appurtenances within the circuit of the site, and the precincts of the said house, which were late in the hands and occupation of

<sup>105</sup> *Mon. Franc., op. cit., ii., xlii.*

<sup>106</sup> Mayer MS., No. 54 (*vide* Morris, 144).

<sup>107</sup> *Vide* account of him later.



the warden, seneschals, governors and convent of the said house, and all the houses, etc., of the said friars in the several tenures of Ralph Rogerson, Ralph Wryne, gent., Thomas Martyn, Thomas Pyllyn, and Fulk Dutton, the reserved rents to the king excepted, to have and to hold to the said Richard from the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel [29 Sept.] next for twenty one years paying 45s. 8d. per annum; he, the said Richard on his part, to carry out repairs, etc. Given at Westminster [no date].<sup>108</sup>

Intimation of the granting of this lease was conveyed to the farmers and tenants by the Chancellor of the Court, and any prior claim was, at the same time, challenged.

" This shal be to require youe in the Kinges behalff to suffer  
 " Richarde Hough to have & occupie all suche landes and  
 " tentes belongyng to the Grey ffriers in West Chester as youe  
 " or any of youe do hold or cleyne to have by Color of any  
 " lease made vnto any of youe by the said late ffriers or els to  
 " shew vnto me before Haloutide next why youe shold not so  
 " do thus fayre youe hertely well. ffrom lemb' the xvijth day  
 " of July.

" Yor loving ffrend

" Rychard Rychess<sup>109</sup>

" To the Tenntes and fermors of the  
 " possessions belongyng to the late  
 " Grey ffriers in West Chester."<sup>110</sup>

Shortly after this the whole of the buildings were sold to Hough, as shewn by the following receipt:—

" Thys byll made the xxvijth day of July In the xxxijth  
 " yere off or Sou'gne lord kynge Henry the viij [1540]  
 " wytnessyth that I Rychard Bowes<sup>111</sup> sarvand vnto Willie  
 " Bolles esquire<sup>112</sup> Recever off or sayd Sou'gne lord have bar-

<sup>108</sup> Mayer MS., No. 53.

<sup>109</sup> This was Richard Rich, first baron Rich, lord chancellor, and a man of unscrupulous character, who was execrated for his treachery by Romanists and Protestants alike. He was appointed Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations of the Revenues of the Crown on 19 April, 1536, and held the appointment until 1544. Rich devoted himself zealously to the suppression of the religious houses, being described as the hammer while Cromwell was the mall. Rich occasionally visited a monastery, but generally contented himself with the administration of their revenues, "and it was natural that some of the enormous wealth which passed through his hands should stick to his fingers."

<sup>110</sup> Mayer MS., No. 55.

<sup>111</sup> Possibly the individual who was subsequently appointed escheator of York.

<sup>112</sup> He was one of the Commissioners of the King in Cheshire in 1536, and was appointed Receiver of Augmentations for the counties of Nottingham, Derby and Cheshire.

"ganed and sold vnto Rychard Hoghe esquire by comande-  
 "ment off my sayd mester auctorysed by the kynge's com-  
 "myssyon all and evary the churche And other howses  
 "loggynges byldynges wt all maner stone tymber sclat and  
 "other stufte thereto appertenying now beinge wthin the syte  
 "& psyngte of the late ffreres mynors off the Syte off Chester  
 "all maner howses places & byldynges beinge before In  
 "laysse by co'vent Sayle to any parson or parsons always  
 "excepted to be by hym and hys assygnys taken downe and  
 "caryed away ffrome tyme to tyme at hys and there plesure  
 "ffor wiche bargaen & sale the sayd Ryc' Hoght hath well &  
 "truely contented & payd vnto me the sayd Richard Bowes  
 "to the Kynge's graces Vuse the sum off xijl. Sterling wher-  
 "off I confesse me truely satsfyed and hym thereoff dys-  
 "charged by thys presents the day & yere above sayd sub-  
 "scrybed my name and set my Sayle

"by me Rychard Bowes."<sup>113</sup>

The next record consists of a fairly minutely detailed account of the friary lands and buildings, the names of several tenants, the leases (most of which, it will be noted, are dated immediately before the actual suppression), and the annual rents.

"The lands and possessions of the Friars Minors  
 "within the city of Chester in a rental of the same made  
 "and renewed before William Bolles esquire, receiver,  
 "and John Wyseman, auditor, commissioners of the king,  
 "81 Hen. viii [1539-40]

"Namely

"Parish of Holy Trinity within the aforesaid city :—

"Farm of one small toft on the east side of the said church  
 "within the parish of Holy Trinity of the aforesaid city, with  
 "24 feet of one 'le Aleys' there demised to Ralph Rogerson  
 "by indenture of the last day of April 30 Hen. viii [1538] for  
 "lxxx years at a yearly rent of ijs and it is noted that the  
 "said Ralph paid to the prior there xx<sup>s</sup> on entry.

"Farm of one close and a stone wall round the same on the  
 "west of the church with the metes and bounds as described  
 "in the indenture, also the farm of a certain house or cham-  
 "ber built on the east side of the close called the ostrye, with  
 "a certain chamber over the common kitchen there, and an-  
 "other chamber called le Bysshopp Chamber, demised to  
 "Ralph Wryne gentleman by indenture dated x June xxx  
 "Hen. viij [1538] for 100 years at a yearly rent of x<sup>s</sup>.

<sup>113</sup> Mayer MS., No. 57 (*vide* Morris, 144).

" Farm of two small chambers on the east of the church, " with a garden called le Co'vent Gardyn, demised to Thomas " Martyn by indenture dated 6 Apr. 29 Hen. viii [1538] for " 60 years at an annual rent of ijs iiij<sup>d</sup>. Nevertheless it is " noted that Richard Hough servant of the most noble lord " Thomas Cromwell declares that this indenture was only " sealed three days before the aforesaid surrender.

" Farm of one house abutting on the dorter on the east part " of le ffarmarye there, demised to Thomas Pylyon by inden- " ture dated [blank] 30 Hen. viii, of which indenture no evi- " dence was produced before the above auditor, and demised " to him for the term of [blank] years at an annual rent of " *vs*.

" Farm of an orchard lying on the east of the chancel there, " demised to Fulk Dutton by indenture dated 2 June 27 Hen. " viii [1535] of the said lord the king for lxxx years, paying " per annum iij<sup>s</sup> o<sup>d</sup>.

" Farm of the land and soil of the whole church together " with the farm of one ' le Aleys ' lying on the south part as " disclosed by witnesses, per annum iij<sup>s</sup> iiij<sup>d</sup>.

" Farm of all other houses and buildings and land and soil " there not demised above, as disclosed by witnesses, per " annum xx<sup>s</sup> o<sup>d</sup>.

" Total ... .. xlv<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup>

" Examined by me John Wyseman, auditor."<sup>114</sup>

Whether the lease to Hough was executed or not, on 5 May, 1544, the sites of the three Chester friaries, together with the rectory of Whitegate and other property, were granted in fee by the king to John Cokkes, a citizen and salter of London, for £358 6s. 10½<sup>d</sup>.<sup>115</sup> In the grant of the site of the Grey Friars it is stated that it included messuages, cottages, chambers, buildings, tofts, gardens, orchards and lands, in Holy Trinity parish, now or late in the occupation or tenure of Ralph Rogerson, Ralph Wryne, Thomas Martyn, Thomas Pylyon, Fulk Dutton, John Thorpe and Richard Hough, and that an annual rent of 4s. 7d. was reserved to the Crown. This grant, which

<sup>114</sup> Mayer MS., No. 56 (*vide* Hemingway, ii., 148, and Ormerod, i., 350). The Mayer MS. differs in several respects from what is printed by Hemingway and Ormerod. The transcript printed by the latter is said to have been extracted from the records of the Augmentation Office and communicated to Ormerod by John Caley, esq., F.S.A. The particulars now given agree with those for 31-32 Hen. viii. (*vide* P.R.O., Ministers Accounts, No. 7394).

<sup>115</sup> P.R.O. Pat. Roll 757 (*vide* *Cal.*).

ignored any rights on the part of the lessees from the friars, as will be seen from the following, excited strong opposition from at least one individual.

"To the righte worshipf'le ser Edwarde North knight  
Chancellor of the kings highe Courte of Augmentacons  
of the revenues of his Crowne

In most humble wise complayneth vnto yor good w<sup>r</sup>shipp  
your daylye Orator John Cockes Cytyzen and Salter of London  
that when our Souraygne lorde the kinges matie that nowe is  
Henry theyght was seased in his demesne as of ffee emongst  
his graces suppressed landes the revenues of his highnes  
Crowne of and in the hole place of the late frerehouse called  
the grey freers in the Cytie of Chester dissolved and sup-  
pressed and all meases howses chambers cotages and buyld-  
inges gardens landes ten'tes lesues pastures and hereditantes  
whatsoever to the same belonging w<sup>t</sup> thapp'tenn'ces set lyinge  
and beyng within the cytie of Chester rightfully belonging to  
his highnes Crowne as parcel of the revenues of the same  
And so seased thereof by his Maties lres Patentis dated at  
Westm. the first day of Maye in the xxxv<sup>th</sup> yere of his Maties  
most noble Reigne for a certeyn some of money to his highnes  
then in this honorable courte payd by your sayd Orator gave  
and graunted vnto your sayd Orator emongest other his graces  
suppressed and dissolved lands and late frerehowses in the  
sayd citie of Chester all the sayde hole place of the sayd late  
dyssolved grey freers And all the sayd meases howses cham-  
bers buyldings pastures and other the premysses w<sup>t</sup> their  
app'tenn'ces To have and to hold vnto your said Orator his  
heires and his assignees for eu' Byforce whereof your sayde  
Orator entred into all and sing'ler the premysses and was  
thereof seased accordingly by good and iuste tytle to him  
rightfully comen and occupied the same Neu'thesse right  
worshipfle Sir so hit is that one Thomas Ball and Edmonde  
Gybbons of the said Citie cruell and evyll dysposed persons  
myndynge to enterupte your said Orator of the peasebleie  
occupacon of the premysses by the comaundemente of Rauf  
Wryne of the sayd Citie alderman and recorder aboute  
Januayre laste and sundry tymes sythen the same tyme w<sup>t</sup>  
force and armes malyciously did breke your said Orators lockes  
beyng on the dore of a certeyn pasture of your said Orators  
lyinge within the walls and precincte of the sayde late grey  
freres and parcel of the same end in the occupacon of the sayd  
late freres in the same lately beyng to their only vses for the  
mayntenance of their hospitalitie And with like force and  
comaundemente contynuyng their cruell entente sythens the

sayd have broken the sayd close and the cattalls there Dep. . . . stray . . . qt [?despasturing] at the appoyntemente of your sayde Orator have taken and dryven onto the comen pounde of the sayde cytie and theym ther wrongfully deteyned and theym beaten and evyll intreated and put in great Daunger of life and yo<sup>r</sup> said Orato<sup>r</sup> can have no remedie at the comen lawe ther Byforce that the sayde Rauf Wryne is recorder Alderman and highe ruler in eu'y case of the saide Citie and yo<sup>r</sup> saide Orato<sup>r</sup> a stranger ther inhabytynge in London so that yo<sup>r</sup> saide Orato<sup>r</sup> cannot peasablie enioye the prysses accordinge to his sayde lres patent<sup>es</sup>. But shalbe compelled to sue to the kinges highnes for allowance and repayments of his sayd money w<sup>ch</sup> for the same in the sayd some he heretofore payde as afore is sayd onelesse yo<sup>r</sup> w'shipps helpe therin be p'uyded for redress of the same Wherfor it may please yo<sup>r</sup> w'ship in tender consideracon of all and sing'ler the p'mysse to send for the sayd Thomas Ball and Edmonde Gybbons here vnto to answer to the kynges most Drade previe seale to apere before yo<sup>r</sup> w'ship ymmediate vpon the recepte therof vnder a certen payne in the same by yo<sup>r</sup> wisdom to be lymtyed. And theropon not onely to ponysh<sup>e</sup> theym for there sayd cruell facte but also to take suche order that yo<sup>r</sup> sayd Orator may peasablie enioye occupie the premysse<sup>s</sup> accordinge to the kinges sayde lres patent<sup>es</sup> to hym graunted And this for the love of God, etc."<sup>116</sup>

Annexed is:—

"The Answere of Thomas Ball to the Bill of Complaynt of John Cokkes.

The sayd Defendant sayth that the saide Bill is vntrue vncerten And insufficient in the lawe to be answered vnto fayned vncharitably by a complain't Beyng a riche merchant man of gret substance to thentent vtterly to vndo the saide defendaunte Beyng a pou' man dwellinge in the Cite of Chester not able to beire the gret charges in defendyng such extreme sutes in this honorable Court so farre from his contrey And the mater comprsed therin merely det'mynable at the coem lawe withe in the said Cite whereunto he praeth to be remitted. Neu'the lesse if he shalbe compelled to make forther Answere in this honorable Court Then he saith that he was neu' party nor prevye to the sayde trespas nor in eny wise is giltye of eny acte or dede alledged agaynst hym in the sayde Bill in man' and fforme as in the same Bill Vntruly is supposed All which matter he is Redy to An'r'r as this honorable Court shall awarde And praythe to be dismissed

<sup>116</sup> P.R.O., Augmentation Proceedings, 14/36.



with is reasonable costes And charges for is wrongfull Vexacon "

Also annexed is :—

" The Answer of Edmund Gibbons to the Bill of complaynt of John Cokkes Citizen and Salter of London.

The sayde defendaunts say that the said Bill is vntrue vncerten and insufficient etc. . . . fayned maliciously [The answer then proceeds as in the previous one, but on behalf of both men, then on behalf of Gibbons only, and then continues] and the said Gibbons for forther answeere and declaracon of the treuth saith that long tyme before and also at the tyme of the trespas supposed to be done and long tyme before that the sayd complaynant eny had in the lands mentioned in the same bill the sayd Rauff Wryne named in the same bill was and yet is lawfully possessed amongst other lands of and in a certen Clause or pasture wth app'tenn'ces lying wthin the Walles of the late Freres specified in the said bill and also in the same Walles by iuste title and lawful conveyance therof made by the late Gou'nor of the sayd freres and the convent of the same for terms of certen yeres yet contynuyng And the sayd Rauff so beyng therof lawfully possessed about the xvj day of December last past one Rychard Hicchecock John Throp and others by comaundement of the sayd complaynant wt force and armes riotesely brake and toke away the lokks and the dore of the sayd Clause or pasture and wth like force entred and put into the same Clause certen catell ther to pastur at ther pleasinge and sett another lokk upon the sayd dore and so wrongfully kept the sayd Rauff from his lawful possession and occupacon therof wherupon the sayd Gibbons then and yet beyng howshold servant of the sayd Rauff and by his comaundement in peaceble wise took of the sayd lokk beside the sayd dore and peacebly entred into the sayd clause drove forth the sayd catell and the same lawfully empounded in the kynges open pound wthin the sayd Citie According to the order of the kynges lawes and custom of the same Citie. Wherupon the sayd Hitchecok and Throp sued forthe the kynges maties Writt of Repleye for the same catell by force whereof the same mater yet dependeth in sute at the coë lawe in the kynges maties honorable Court before the mair w'in the sayd Citie yet not determyned [w'out that—sic] that the said defendants of eny evill disposed mynd wt force and armes maliciousely break eny locks upon eny dore of eny pasture of the said complaynants or wt like force or cruell entent syns the tyme lymytted in the sayd bill break the said Close or eny catell ther pasturyng toke or drave to the co'en pound of the sayd Citie other wise than is above rehersed or

eny suche catell ther wrongfully deteyned or theym beete & evill entreated or put in daunger of liff in man' and forme as in the sayd bill vntruely is alleged All which maters the sayd defendants should be redy to an'e as the honorable Court shall award and forasmuche as the mater above rehersed is not dependinge at the cōem lawe as is aforesaid but also before yor maistership in this honorable court here at the sute of the sayd complaynant against the said Rauff Wryne beyng a verey partys to the same Whereby it doth manifestly appere that the sute against these pou' defendants in this honorable court is but only of malice and for vexation lyke to empou'isshe and binde them w'out cause as the said Hitchcok servant of the complaynant openly manasith theym so to doo The same defendants pray to be dismissed out of this honorable co't w<sup>t</sup> their reasonable expenses in this behalff susteyned, etc."<sup>117</sup>

John Cockes sold the site of the White Friars to Fulk Dutton of Chester a fortnight after he had acquired the three friaries from the king, but he retained the other two. As a result of his considerable speculations in church property Cockes amassed wealth and developed into a county gentleman, being styled John Cocks, of Redbourn, co. Hert, esquire. On 30 July, 1556, he had a royal licence to alienate all his manors, etc. to Thomas Cocks<sup>118</sup> his son. Immediately on the accession of Elizabeth, Thomas Cokkes of Reymondes [or Beaumonts, near St. Albans], co. Hert., gentleman, was allowed further to alienate the property. The licence from the Queen shews that in consideration of the sum of 36s. 8d. the sites of the Grey and Black Friaries, held of the Crown *in capite*, were granted to Edward Bygges, of London, gentleman, and Elizabeth his wife, for ever. This is dated 12 Oct. 1 Eliz. [1559].<sup>119</sup>

Sixteen months later, *i.e.*, 7 Feb. 3 Eliz. [1560/1], the Queen granted licence for a still further alienation of the two sites, in consideration of a similar amount. The parties on this occasion were Thomas Cookes [*sic*], of Reymonde, co. Hert., gentleman, and Bridget his wife, and

<sup>117</sup> P.R.O., Augmentation Proceedings, 13/95.

<sup>118</sup> P.R.O., Rot. Memorand. (L.T.R.), 4 & 5 P. & M., Hil. Rec., 20, 49 (*vide Reliquary*, xxiii., 103).

<sup>119</sup> P.R.O., Pat. Roll 948.

Edward Bygges and Elizabeth his wife, to Richard Dutton, of Chester, gentleman, for ever.<sup>120</sup>

Thus the Grey and Black Friaries also passed into the possession of the Chester branch of the Dutton family, and the sites are mentioned in the *inquisitio post mortem* of Richard Dutton [who died in 1583] which was held in 1590. The reference therein to the Franciscan site is as follows :—

“ The dissolved house and site of the Freers Minors commonly called the Grey Freers in the city of Chester lately dissolved and six messuages or cottages in the parish of Holy Trinity to the said house belonging all part of the possessions of the friars minors . . . and held of the Queen in chief by service of . . . part of a knight's fee paying yearly to the Queen for the house site and other premises of the friars minors 4s. 7d.”<sup>121</sup>

In 1588 Edward Dutton, son and heir of Richard, demised his interest in the friary to Peter Warburton, of Arley, and the son-in-law of the latter, Thomas Wilbraham, of Woodhey,<sup>122</sup> and the site was granted to them by the Queen. The friary was described at that time as being the residence of Peter Warburton, a lawyer and alderman of Chester.<sup>123</sup> It is doubtful, however, if Warburton was living at the Grey Friary, as his house is called the Black

<sup>120</sup> P.R.O., Pat. Roll 966.

<sup>121</sup> Partly from *The Duttons of Dutton*, and partly from *Inquisitio post mortem* of Richard Dutton at P.R.O.

<sup>122</sup> P.R.O., Pat. Roll 1335. Ormerod, ii., 705, gives the date of the demise as 1579, and states that the information was supplied by Sir J. T. Stanley, bart. Hemingway, ii., 147, and Morris, 145, repeat the statement. The original grant is said to be at Alderley. In Harl. MS. 2020 [f. 458], there is a rough abstract of a record which is connected with the friary as the following note is written in the margin—“ the Grey frees in Watergat street [? and] ye Black friers.” The note appears to shew that in an action in the nature of *entry on disseisin* pending in the Portmote at Chester, in 1587, between William Glasier against George Warburton, gent., and Peter Warburton of Chester, esq., for lands in the parish of Holy Trinity, comprising 20 messuages, a garden, and an acre of land, the defendants called upon John Davenport of London, haberdasher, and Joan [or Jane] his wife to warrant their title. The sheriffs accordingly summoned them to attend at Chester, but they were too feeble to make the journey or attend, and so a commission was issued whereby any two or more of the four commissioners were given power, presumably, to hear the truth of the matter in London. This seems to indicate a Davenport interest in the property before 21 July, 1587.

<sup>123</sup> Ormerod, ii., 705.

Hall in the Watergate Street. The late Mr. T. Hughes, F.S.A., identifies the Black Hall with a building which was erected in the sixteenth century on the south side of Watergate Street, in the place where the headquarters of the Western Command are now situated.<sup>124</sup> It seems most likely that this is correct, and, if so, Warburton was living in a house built on or near the site of the Black Friary and not at the Grey Friary.

Some of the details of the possessions of the Grey friars are given in the following abstract of the permission to alienate :—

The Queen to all her bailiffs, etc. That whereas by a certain deed of feoffment dated 16 Sep. in the 30th year of our reign [1588] Edward Dutton gent. and his heirs have granted to Peter Warburton, of Arley, co. Ches., gent., and Thomas Wilbraham, esq. the house of the Friars Minors, commonly called the Grey Fryers within the city of Chester lately dissolved, one close of pasture containing about three acres in which there was a pigeon house ; an orchard or croft adjacent on the east, and a toft and a garden now in the possession of Peter Warburton of Chester ; also one office or house of work commonly called a work-house ; together with one garden and a vacant piece of land late in the possession of William Stevenson, joiner, all of which recited premises have been the site and appurtenant to the house of the said late Friars Minors, and enclosed and surrounded by a stone wall hard by the Watergate and late in the tenancy or occupation of Thomas Grene, of Chester alderman.

And all that [property late belonging to the Black Friars], which we hold *in capite*. To have and to hold to the said Peter and Thomas and their heirs for ever. Know, therefore that we, of our special favour and in consideration of 20s. grant permission to alienate etc. Dated at Westminster 22 April [1588/9]. Annotated 'In rogat' permission to alienate to Peter Warburton et als.<sup>125</sup>

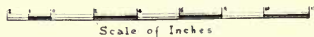
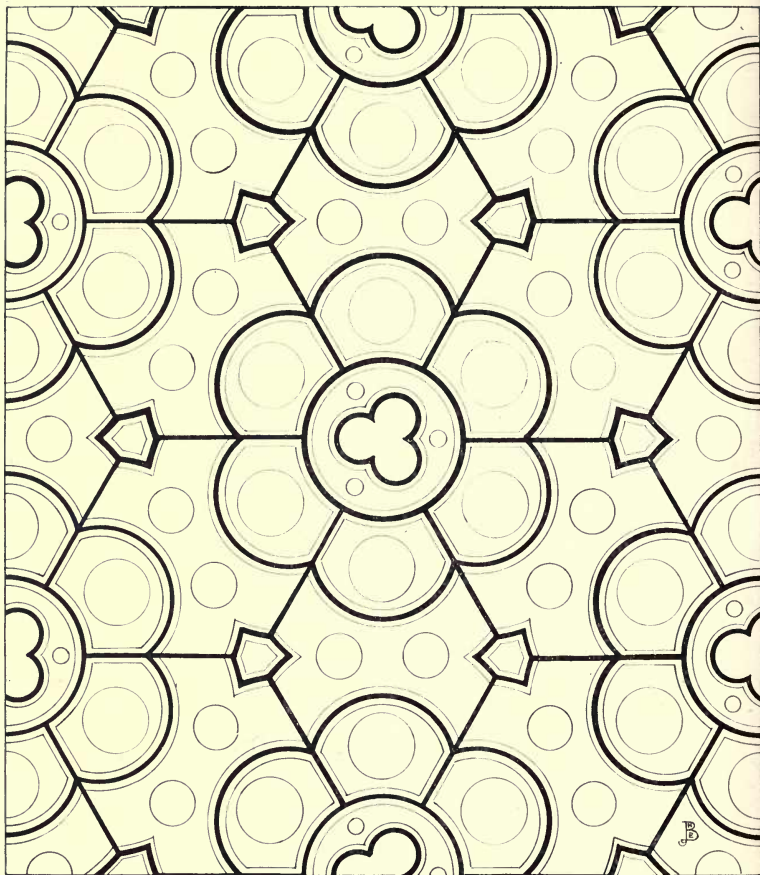
Sir Peter Warburton, of Grafton, co. Ches., knight, one of the justices of the King's Bench, and a son-in-law of the Peter Warburton of Arley, already mentioned, was found, in an *inquisitio post mortem* held 10 Sep. [20 Jas. I.], 1622, to have died seized of . . . premises

<sup>124</sup> *Cheshire Sheaf* (1st S.), i., 246.

<sup>125</sup> P.R.O., Pat. Roll 1335.







Section of glazed tile flooring discovered on assumed site of Frater. Most of the designs incised on the tiles are repeated on the other tiles reproduced on pages 17 and 26.

in Chester, "including the site of the house of the friars "minors, commonly called les Gray fryers, and four "acres of land appertaining thereto."<sup>126</sup>

Early in the seventeenth century the church of the Grey Friars had been transformed into a dwelling house, and it is said to have been then "in the possession of Sir Thomas "Smith, of Chester and Hough."<sup>127</sup> At the time the plan of the friary was made, probably in the second half of the seventeenth century, the friary is shewn as a residence of Sir William Brereton.<sup>128</sup> Be this as it may, by the marriage of Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Sir Peter Warburton, of Grafton, to Sir Thomas Stanley, of Alderley, the site of the Grey Friars, as well as that of the Black Friars, passed into the possession of the Stanley family.<sup>129</sup> This gives the reason for the naming of Stanley Place and Stanley Street, which were subsequently laid out on the old friary lands.

#### 7.—THE LINEN HALL.

The acquisition of the site of the Grey Friary and other property by the "proprietors of the Linen Hall," as the merchants who built that place were styled, and the frequent reference to the site, in the records relating to the later building, call for some mention of the venture of the Irish linen merchants.

With the object of diverting trade from the old Linen Hall near the Cathedral, on 14 Oct., 1774, forty merchants agreed to contribute £100 each for the erection of a new hall. Nine months later, on 26 July, 1775, four nominees of the linen merchants contracted with Sir John Thomas Stanley, bart., for the purchase of a freehold field called the Grey Friars' Close or the Yatch Field, together with houses, stables, barns, gardens, and hereditaments, in or

<sup>126</sup> Ormerod, ii., 704. Also *Chester Inq. p.m.*, 97.

<sup>127</sup> Harl. MS. 2125, f. 267 etc. *Antiquity of Chester*. Also Lysons 577. There is no mention of Chester property in the *inq. p. m.* of either Sir Thomas Smith or of his son Sir Laurence Smith.

<sup>128</sup> Harl. MS. 2073, f. 21.

<sup>129</sup> Ormerod, iii., 576.

near to Watergate Street and in Lower, Locker or Grey Friars' Lane, and formerly part of the said field, subject to a perpetual chief or ground rent of £180.

The merchants also contracted for the purchase of freehold houses, a smith's shop, gardens and hereditaments, on the same side of Grey Friars' Lane and bounded on the west by Grey Friars' Close, which Stanley had purchased from the Rev. Samuel Boswell and Charles Boswell, subject to a perpetual chief rent of £17 18s. 0d. Also of a leasehold cottage, on the same side of the said lane and bounded on the west by Grey Friars' Close, which Stanley had purchased from Samuel Boswell and Thomas and Elizabeth Woolright, for the residue of a term of 500 years, subject to a chief rent of £2 2s. 0d. This cottage had formed part of the Cheshire estate of Sir Thomas Smith, of Chester and Hough, and had been leased on 21 July, 1688, by his representatives.

By an agreement, dated 13 Oct., 1775, the forty subscribers undertook to complete the purchase, to erect upon part of the land a linen hall, to sell upon chief rent the surplus land, to appoint new trustees, and, annually, nine committee men, to ballot for the right to shops in the Linen Hall, and to have them leased, to those who drew them, for the term of 999 years, at an annual rent. Two days later most of the forty executed a bond to effect the indemnity of the four nominees against the liability imposed upon them by their agreement with Stanley.

On 25 Sep., 1777, Sir John Thomas Stanley, Oswald Leicester, and the Rev. Obadiah Lane, conveyed and assigned the property to the four nominees, who undertook to erect the hall and keep it in repair, and vendor reserved power to retake possession should the rent be in arrear for fifty days.

In 1778 the new Linen Hall was erected on the north-eastern portion of the land. It was an unpretentious brick building of quadrangular form and of considerable extent. The surrounding wall was lofty, and around the inner face of it thirty-six double and twenty-four single

shops were built. At the same date the remainder of the land abutting on Watergate Street and the City Walls was offered for sale, as indicated in the following advertisement which was continuously inserted in the *Chester Courant* from April to August, 1778 :—

" Chester. There is now to be let for building on under the customary building leases several hundred yards of land, situate, lying, and being in a field commonly called and known by the name of the Yatch field,<sup>130</sup> near the Watergate, within and adjoining to the City Walls, being a most convenient, dry, and healthy situation, commanding a very pleasant prospect of the Flintshire hills and the River Dee with great part of the inclosed lands recovered from the sea. Its extent will admit of erecting elegant houses that might be formed into a square which will open to the City Walls, and its situation may, with great propriety, be considered as in the country. Part of this ground will afford very good houses with every convenience to be built to front Watergate Street. A plan of the whole may be seen by applying to Mr. Edward Woodfin, carpenter, in Watergate street, who will receive proposals.

(signed) William Griffiths."

The sale was duly effected and the suggestion for forming a square and a range of houses facing Watergate Street carried out. The latter, known as Watergate Flags, was first erected, as evidenced by the date, " 1779," which is cast on two of the existing spout-heads. Stanley Place quickly followed, and on the spout-heads of several of the houses dates extending from " 1780 " to " 1783 " may be seen.

On 27 Sep., 1781, thirty-seven of the forty merchants, doubtless those who had kept up their subscriptions, agreed to vest the land in trustees for a term of 1,000 years, to secure the payments of the chief rents to Stanley, and to

<sup>130</sup> The Yacht Field appears to have taken its name from the Yacht Inn (usually written "Yatch" in earlier times), and Mr. G. W. Haswell makes the interesting suggestion that the hostelry may not have been dedicated to the class of boat with which it is generally connected, but that the word may be intended for "yate" or "yatt," and that the house was the Gate or Gate-house Inn, the entrance to the friary being in close proximity. Yatch, however, is not an unusual, although incorrect, spelling of yacht, and the situation of the house makes it very nearly connected with the once important maritime interests of Chester.

safeguard the four nominees, the signatories of the bond, and the purchasers of the surplus land from liability. Accordingly, on 1 Oct. following, the property (except such part as should be sold for building purposes) was leased to . . . Barnston, Robert Hesketh and Henry Hesketh—the freehold for 1,000 years and the leasehold for 400 years.

On 5 Aug., 1782, the four nominees leased for 999 years, at an annual rent of £12, to presumably each of the thirty-seven continuing subscribers, a double-fronted shop in the Linen Hall, and declared that they held in trust from each one thirty-seventh part of the property vested in them.

By deeds of various dates, as shewn below, the land which was not required for the Linen Hall and which was "part of Grey Friars' Close," was conveyed by the Stanleys to numerous purchasers upon small annual chief rents. The following are details :—

|              |                     |        | £     | s. | d. | £  | s. | d. |
|--------------|---------------------|--------|-------|----|----|----|----|----|
| 18 Oct. 1782 |                     |        |       |    |    |    |    |    |
| 1.           | Thomas Marsden      | ... .. | 3     | 16 | 4  |    |    |    |
| 2.           | F. and S. Townshend | ... .. | 3     | 12 | 0  |    |    |    |
| 3.           | Ed. Townshend       | ... .. | 4     | 1  | 0  |    |    |    |
| 4.           | Henry Hesketh       | ... .. | 4     | 11 | 6  |    |    |    |
| 5.           | John Kennerley      | ... .. | 1     | 15 | 0  |    |    |    |
| 6.           | William Hall        | ... .. | 2     | 9  | 0  |    |    |    |
| 7.           | George Fairclough   | ... .. | 5     | 11 | 3  |    |    |    |
| 8.           | Francis Ayres       | ... .. | 3     | 10 | 0  |    |    |    |
| 9.           | Thomas Griffies     | ... .. | 3     | 11 | 8  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | 4     | 0  | 0  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | 4     | 0  | 0  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | 4     | 0  | 0  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | 2     | 0  | 0  |    |    |    |
| 10.          | Thomas Griffies     | ... .. | 3     | 15 | 0  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | 4     | 10 | 0  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | 1     | 2  | 6  |    |    |    |
| 11.          | William Flockhart   | ... .. | 3     | 4  | 2  |    |    |    |
| 12.          | Nath. Hind          | ... .. | 5     | 1  | 6  |    |    |    |
| 13.          | Edward Rowland      | ... .. | 3     | 16 | 6  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | 2     | 14 | 0  |    |    |    |
| 14.          | John James          | ... .. | 2     | 9  | 0  |    |    |    |
| 15.          | Edward Woodfin      | ... .. | 1     | 17 | 9  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | 1     | 15 | 0  |    |    |    |
|              |                     |        | <hr/> |    |    | 77 | 3  | 2  |



| 5 July 1783 |                                       |     |     | £   | s. | d. | £    | s. | d.   |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|------|----|------|
| 16.         | Thomas Barnes                         | ... | ... | ... | 1  | 15 | 0    |    |      |
| 17.         | Edward Woodfin                        | ... | ... | {   | 2  | 12 | 6    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     | 2  | 12 | 6    |    |      |
| 18.         | William Davies                        | ... | ... | {   | 3  | 16 | 6    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     | 1  | 8  | 4    |    |      |
| 19.         | Benj. Saunders                        | ... | ... | {   | 3  | 7  | 6    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     | 3  | 7  | 6    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     | 1  | 9  | 0    |    |      |
| 20.         | Thomas Griffies                       | ... | ... | {   | 2  | 12 | 6    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     | 2  | 12 | 6    |    |      |
| 21.         | Thomas Rathbone                       | ... | ... | {   | 2  | 0  | 0    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     | 3  | 15 | 0    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      | 31 | 8 10 |
| <hr/>       |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |
| 2 Oct. 1816 |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |
| 22.         | Jane and John G. Brittain             | ... | ... | ... | 4  | 0  | 0    |    |      |
| 23.         | Thomas Lunt                           | ... | ... | ... | 0  | 10 | 0    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      | 4  | 10 0 |
| <hr/>       |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |
| 9 July 1818 |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |
| 24.         | Also other land and leasehold cottage |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |
|             | James Lightfoot                       | ... | ... | {   | 2  | 0  | 0    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     | 2  | 0  | 0    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      | 4  | 0 0  |
| <hr/>       |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |
| 3 Oct. 1820 |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |
| 25.         | James Lightfoot                       | ... | ... | ... | 4  | 0  | 0    |    |      |
|             |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      | 4  | 0 0  |
| <hr/>       |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |
| Total       |                                       |     |     | ... |    |    | £121 | 2  | 0    |
| <hr/>       |                                       |     |     |     |    |    |      |    |      |

Considerable business was carried on at the Linen Hall for a number of years, but Hemingway, writing in or about 1837, says: "For many years the Irish linen merchants have ceased to import their linens direct to Chester and in consequence very few of these shops are let at our Midsummer or Michaelmas fairs. It is understood that the proprietors are desirous of disposing of the whole concern."<sup>131</sup>

In 1887 the chief rents of £180, £17 18s. 0d., and £2 2s. 0d. were conveyed by the then Lord Stanley, of Alderley, to Mr. Thomas John Rider, of Ellesmere, whose long deceased father had acquired the interests of the thirty-

seven Linen Hall subscribers, and, in 1919, the executors of the Will of his son conveyed to the Chester Race Company the 8,750 square yards of land forming the site of the Linen Hall, and 689 square yards forming the site of Nos. 13 to 21, Linen Hall Street, and a stable. The house, etc., property appears to have been immediately resold to the Chester Corporation, who had already acquired Nos. 3 to 9 inclusive, which doubtless mark the position of the old entrance to the Grey Friary.

### 8.—THE CONVENTUAL SEAL.

The only known impression of the Seal of the Chester Franciscan Friary is that appended to the deed by which the fraternity granted part of the church to the merchants and sailors of the city. There are rough sketches of it in the journal of the Chester Archæological Society,<sup>132</sup> and in Canon Morris' history,<sup>133</sup> and a cast of the seal has recently been added to the collection in the British Museum.<sup>134</sup> The design is of the *Christus regnans de ligno* type; the crucified figure wearing a long garb with a girdle and an imperial crown. Encircling it is this inscription:—

S[IGILLVM]: FRATR[V]M: MINORV[M]:  
CESTRIE

The impression is not particularly good, but the seal is of an interesting type and it is not unlikely to have been in use from the date of the foundation.

### 9.—THE WARDENS.

Of the wardens and their fellow friars little information has come to light. Possibly the "ffr Ricardus de Haber-  
"leye sac' et Prof'<sup>135</sup> Cestrie," whose name is given in a

<sup>132</sup> (Old S.), i., 153.

<sup>133</sup> 143.

<sup>134</sup> Detached Seal No. clxvi.

<sup>135</sup> "Sac' et Prof'." It seems that this, which has no recognised meaning as it stands, must be "Sac. Theol. Prof."—his university degree. "Sacerdos et professor" would not be likely, as "professor" by itself implies nothing, and "presbyter" is the habitual designation of the order of priest in such a context.—A.H.T.

list of brothers deceased shortly after the Chapter General of the Order held at Bononia [?Bologna] on 22 May, 1328,<sup>136</sup> was an early warden of the house, but beyond this the names of only three wardens of the Grey Friars of Chester have survived, namely:—

1403, William Leggesley or Seggesley.

1433-4 Feb. 14, David Bromfield.<sup>137</sup>

1537, William Wall.

Even of the first two, beyond their names, nothing is known, but considerable detail is extant relating to the third.

William Wall,<sup>138</sup> the last warden of the house, was a man of some distinction. He was of Cheshire descent, being a son of John Wall, of Helsby, by his wife, Elizabeth, a daughter of Richard Worrall, mayor of Chester in 1508.<sup>139</sup> Having studied for 12 years, on 3 July, 1513, Wall obtained at Oxford grace to oppose, with the stipulation that six months should intervene between his opposition and responson.<sup>141</sup> Described as a "Minorite," he took the degree of Bachelor of Divinity at Oxford, on 16 June, 1515.<sup>140</sup> Wall incepted in June or July, 1518, and half his composition was remitted.<sup>141</sup> In December, 1518, he was dispensed from his regency for a fortnight.<sup>141</sup> It is

<sup>136</sup> *Collec. Franciscana*, by A. G. Little (Brit. Soc. Franc. Studies), i., 150.

<sup>137</sup> Mentioned by Morris, but no authority given.

<sup>138</sup> Other namesakes were William Wall, clerk, who was enfeoffed in trust of the manor of Dalton, etc., by Sir Piers Legh, of Bradley, co. Lanc., knight and priest, on 12 Mar., 1496 (*L. & C. Rec. Soc.*, xxx., 73). Another namesake was Abbot of Kenilworth from 1516 or 1517 until the Suppression (*Camden Soc.*, xxvi., 134). In 1525 there was a fellow of Eton College of this name. (Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*).

<sup>139</sup> Visitation of Cheshire, 1580, etc. (Harl. Soc., xviii.), 270. This does not agree with Harl. MS., 2151 (f. 44), in which, under the heading "St. Werburgis," the following occurs:—

"this epitaph of Doctor Wall is in the  
"large glasse window ou' the west doore  
"of the minster.

"sub hac fenestra jacet Willielmus Wall nuper huius ecclesie Preben-  
"darius, ac olim minorita: filius Willelmi Wall pauperis heremite; qui  
"post mortem vxoris suæ, ad solitudinem Montis Mulicarni se con-  
"tulit ibidem solitaria, vitam ducens oratione jeiunio et contempla-  
"tione"

<sup>140</sup> *Alumni Oxonienses*.

<sup>141</sup> *The Grey Friars in Oxford*, by A. G. Little (Oxford Hist. Soc., xx.).

related that "Br. Wm. Wall, Franciscan, bachelor," who had supplicated for the cap in 1516 was this year admitted to proceed, and, accordingly, took the degree of Doctor of Divinity.<sup>142</sup> According to Foster, Wall took this degree in June, 1518.<sup>140</sup>

In 1528 William Wall and his brother Robert, who was a baker of Chester, were parties to a bond.<sup>143</sup> On 20 Oct., 1530, Wall is described as "deputy M[aster] official in the Collegiate Church of St. John's at Chester,"<sup>144</sup> and, in a pedigree, as "one of the masters of St. John's Colledge."<sup>145</sup> The late Mr. T. Hughes, F.S.A., says that Wall was then a prebendary of St. John's<sup>146</sup> and serving the altar of one of the many chapels included within that church.<sup>147</sup> Dr. Ormerod states that Wall was a canon of St. John's, and adds that he was removed to a prebend in Chester Cathedral *before* the Dissolution, which, as inferring that there were prebendaries of the present Cathedral before the see was created, appears to be an error.<sup>148</sup>

In 1536,<sup>149</sup> or 1537,<sup>150</sup> Wall commenced to build a conduit at Boughton, presumably at the springs then known as St. Giles', for the purpose of providing the city with

<sup>142</sup> *Coll. Min.*, *op. cit.*

<sup>143</sup> Chester Arch. Soc. (New S.), xxii., 134.

<sup>144</sup> *Sheaf* (1st S.), i., 55.

<sup>145</sup> *Visit. of Cheshire*, 1580, etc. *op. cit.* There are other pedigrees of the Walls of Helsby and Chester in the Harleian MSS.

<sup>146</sup> "Prebendary of St. John's" is not strictly accurate. A prebendary is the prebendary of his prebend, but a *canon* of the church from which his prebend is derived. The official title was "A. canonicus ecclesiæ collegiatæ sancti Johannis Cestriæ et prebendarius primæ prebendæ [or primi stalli] sanctæ Crucis ex boreali parte chori ejusdem" or words to that effect, according to his prebend; and this is true of every church of secular canons. On the other hand, "prebendaries of the Cathedrall Church in Chester" (St. Werburgh's) is right, as the stall-holders in Henry VIII's new foundations were not styled canons, and were prebendaries as regarded both the churches and their prebends—owing to which fact a great confusion has arisen about the use of the titles "prebendary" and "canon" in the old foundations. But mediaeval usage is clear on the point: the individual was a prebendary *in* a church, but a canon *of* it. Prebendaries were frequently in the eighteenth century called prebends for short, as at Durham, but the use is inaccurate.—A.H.T.

<sup>147</sup> *Sheaf* (1st S.), i., 55.

<sup>148</sup> i., 308.

<sup>149</sup> Morris, 282, quoting Harl. MS. 2125.

<sup>150</sup> *Sheaf* (3rd S.), viii., 87, and *Vale Royal*, i., 82, ii., 195.

water. The leaden pipes from the conduit were laid along the river side "to the Bridge Gate, against Mr. Brere-wood's house." Years after, in 1584, when a conduit was erected at the Cross, it was decorated with the arms of "Mr Doctor Wall," in company with those of the earls of Derby and Leicester, the city, and Mr. Offley,<sup>151</sup> in recognition of services rendered to the community.

On 1 or 4 Aug., 1541, Wall was admitted a prebendary of Chester Cathedral "per fundationem," and a fellow prebendary, John Hewett,<sup>152</sup> in his will of 30 Oct., 154-, bequeathed "to Mr Doctor Wall my beste jackedd and "my best dowblett."<sup>153</sup> Thomas Clarke, dean of Chester, in his will of 14 Sep., 1541, appointed "Doctor Wylliam "Wallen [and two other] prebendaries of the cathedrall "churche in Chester affore my lawfful executors."<sup>154</sup> On 3 May, 1551, the Dean and Chapter sold a bell weighing eighteen hundredweight to two citizens for £34, and the receipt of the money is acknowledged by Wall.<sup>155</sup> His signature, with those of the Dean and other prebendaries, is appended to an inventory of the Cathedral vestments, plate, etc., dated May, 1553.<sup>156</sup>

On 24 Apr., 1555, Dr. Wall was to be found among those present at the formal trial of George Marsh, before he was burnt at Spital Boughton.<sup>157</sup> Two years later Wall's signature may be seen; the first appended to the declaration of the subscribers to "The Three Articles" in Cheshire.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Morris, 284, quoting Harl. MS., 2093, f. 205. It may be here mentioned that the arms of the earls of Derby and Leicester, the queen, and those of the city, the last with the date "1585," are carved on four freestone slabs now resting against the east wall of St. John's Church. It has previously been assumed (*vide Two Elizabethan Chamberlains of Chester*, in Chester Arch. Soc. Journal, New S., xx., 192, *et seq.*) that the slabs had been fixed in the church mentioned, but this was not proved, and the possibility of the arms having been some of those fixed on the conduit is worth bearing in mind.

<sup>152</sup> or Huett, admitted a prebendary on the same date and probably identical with John Jote, Wall's late fellow friar. Jote is not an unlikely form of the variable Jewett, Iwett, Hewitt, etc.

<sup>153</sup> *Chetham Soc.* (old S.), li., 151.

<sup>156</sup> Morris, 153.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*, xxxiii., 126.

<sup>157</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., iii., 46.

<sup>155</sup> *Sheaf*, 1st S., i., 152.

<sup>158</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., i., 34.



When the form of worship again changed, on the accession of Elizabeth, Wall (who must then have been an old man) is given, in the Royal Visitation of 1559, as one of the few Cathedral clergy conforming.<sup>159</sup> Subsequently Wall is mentioned, in 1560, in the will of George Wilmisley, chancellor of the diocese, and half-brother of the notorious Bonner. "I geave and bequethe to my trustye "ffrend Mr Doctor Wall my best jacket that I have at that "tymme [of my decease] for a remembrance."<sup>160</sup>

Notwithstanding his pliable temperament, the last years of the ex-warden's life were not without trouble, as among the State Papers<sup>160a</sup> there is a list of twenty-three commissioners for Ecclesiastical Causes in the diocese of Chester, from which, in or about 1567, it was proposed that Dr. William Wall and four others should be removed as "suspected in religion or of vicious life."

It is unlikely that Wall ever married, and he died in 1574<sup>161</sup> without issue.<sup>162</sup> He appears to have been the author of a remarkable sermon, as a note identifying him with the builder of the conduit says, "This was he that "preached in his sermon the world woulde be worse and "worse."<sup>163</sup> In *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers* (3rd S., 59), taken from notes compiled about 1592, the following is given: "A preacher and chaplain of Dr. Wall's in "Chester, in scorn of Tyburn and of a square cap, swore "he would never wear a corner cap<sup>164</sup> and soon after "hanged himself."<sup>165</sup>

<sup>159</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., iii., 27.

<sup>160</sup> *Chetham Soc.* (old S.), xxxiii., 122.

<sup>160a</sup> Dom., Add., 1566-79, 47.

<sup>161</sup> Ormerod, i., 268.

<sup>162</sup> *Harl. Soc.*, xviii., 270.

<sup>163</sup> Morris, 145, quoting Harl. MS., 2125.

<sup>164</sup> The square cap was made of stuff, sufficiently full to allow of its forming four distinct corners at the top, and came down over the ears and the back of the head. It was the forerunner of the present college cap. The cap came into vogue in the sixteenth century and remained for long the recognised form of sacerdotal head wear, and its use was enforced by an Injunction of Elizabeth. An absurd amount of trouble was taken to enforce the use and an unaccountable amount of heat shown in opposition to it. (*Historic Dress of the Clergy*, G. S. Tyack, pp. 45-48).

<sup>165</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., vii., 20.

## 10.—THE TENANTS AND FARMERS.

The individuals who held leases of the friary lands and who were otherwise interested in them are so closely connected with the place that some account of them is desirable, and the following notes have been collected :—

RALPH ROGERSON. There were at least two citizens of this name in Chester about the time of the Reformation. The elder one, an ironmonger, is first mentioned in the will of his father, dated 1519.<sup>166</sup> Two years later he was sheriff of Chester, and in 1527 he was appointed an executor of the will of Dr. Thomas Sparke, and was mentioned in the will as a legatee.<sup>167</sup> Among the plate possessed by the Corporation in 1533 there was “ a standing cupp “ w<sup>t</sup> a couer weyng xxxiiij<sup>ti</sup> onces and iij quarters ” which had been given to the city by Rogerson. This piece was subsequently melted up and turned into coin at the Siege.<sup>168</sup> In 1533 Rogerson or “ Rogers ” was one of the tenants of the Butter-shops.<sup>169</sup> In 1534-5 he served the office of mayor. There was, in the year 1572, in Eccleston church, a “ window on the south side of Eaton Chappell . . . “ [containing] two kneeling figures with eight sonnes and “ four daughters ; no arms—subscribed :—‘ Of your “ charitie pray for the souls of Rafe Rogers, Maior of “ Chester, and Lucy his wife. Anno 1534.’ ”<sup>170</sup> A Rafe Rogerson was pardoned by the King in 1539/40 for shipping leather without paying the dues.<sup>171</sup>

Later, with other riotous persons to the number of 400, a Rafe Rogerson entered a pasture near the Bache (held by lease by William Glaseor for 99 years from the abbot and convent of St. Werburgh), and destroyed the hedges, etc. Also, with another mob of 300 persons, Rogerson cut down the hedges of a pasture adjoining Pynchewar’s Heys held by William Goodman, alderman, for six years from the abbot and later from the dean and chapter. The date of the first trespass is not given, but it would appear to

<sup>166</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., xiii., 90.

<sup>167</sup> *Chetham Soc.*, old S., xxx., 16.

<sup>168</sup> *Sheaf*, 1st S., i., 170.

<sup>169</sup> *Sheaf*, 1st S., ii., 208.

<sup>170</sup> Harl. MS., 2151, f. 63.

<sup>171</sup> Morris, 543.

have occurred on or about the date of the second, *i.e.*, February 1545/6.<sup>172</sup> The above probably relates to a younger Ralph who had been enfranchised in 1540, the same year as two other Rogersons, one of whom is described as the son of Ralph Rogerson, alderman. In 1551 the younger Ralph was elected sheriff. His connection with Holy Trinity parish is illustrated by a reference in the churchwardens' accounts in 1559 to a payment "for a leystall for Rafe Rogerson's wife 3s. 4d."

RALPH WRINE. He was appointed recorder of Chester in 1535, and clerk of the Pentice in 1540. The Wrine family were sometime seated at Wrinehill on the borders of Staffordshire, and their coat of arms is given in Harl. MS., 1535, f. 29b. The recorder was son of one William Wrine.<sup>173</sup> The family figure more than once in the transference of church property within Chester itself during "the hungry Reformation period,"<sup>174</sup> and Ralph Wrine secured some of the Littleton property of St. Werburgh's.

THOMAS MARTYN. This individual was a Chester merchant who was admitted a freeman, as such, on 2 Apr., 1511. He was sheriff of the city 1534-5 and, on 20 Feb., 1539/40, with several other citizens, he received the king's pardon for shipping leather without payment of the accustomed dues.<sup>175</sup> The following extracts from the printed volume of *Holy Trinity Parish Registers* appear to indicate residence in that quarter:—

1537. "Mr Martyn mother's leystall ijs."

1555. "Mrs Martyn owes for her husband's leystall —."

1556. "Mrs Martyn for her husband's leystall ijs."

THOMAS PILLYN, of Chester, was son of Henry Pillyn, of the same city, and he was enfranchised as a shoemaker on 3 Dec., 1533. In or about 1545 he was one of the numerous defendants in two cases where the hedges of fields in the neighbourhood of Chester were broken down and other damages done by riotous bodies of men, as outlined in certain bills of complaint preserved among the

<sup>172</sup> *L. & C. Rec. Soc.*, lxxi., 102, etc.

<sup>174</sup> *Sheaf*, 1st S., i., 247.

<sup>173</sup> *King's Vale Royal*, ii., 195.

<sup>175</sup> *Morris*, 543.

records of the Court of Star Chamber.<sup>176</sup> At another time Pillyn was a petitioner in the same Court against Sir Piers Dutton, Sir Thomas Pynchewar,<sup>177</sup> and Sir Thomas Horseman, knights, who, it appears, had forcibly entered half built houses at Chester.<sup>178</sup> In 1554 Pillyn is mentioned in the will of William Goodman,<sup>177 179</sup> and in April of the next year, at the trial of George Marsh, "one Pulleyn, a "shoemaker," made himself prominent among the priests and people who "called on Marsh to recant with "many earnest words." "They bade him kneel down and "pray and they would pray with him and so it was "done."<sup>180</sup> A Thomas Pyllyn, gent., was feodary of the county of Chester in 1556,<sup>181</sup> no doubt the erstwhile shoemaker, who, in 1561, was elected one of the sheriffs. In 1567-8 Pillyn was an alderman of the Shoemakers' Company, and in 1568 he is described as "gentleman" and "merchant" and then "defunct."<sup>182</sup>

JOHN THROP. Little information is available respecting this citizen, but there is small doubt that he was ancestor to a royalist mayor of considerable individuality. In 1536 Throp is named as a witness to the will of Thomas Baxter, rector of St. Peter's,<sup>183</sup> and in 1545 he was concerned in the actions for trespass in which Ralph Rogerson and Thomas Pillyn also figure.<sup>184</sup>

FULK DUTTON, of Chester, alderman, was admitted a freeman, as a draper, 10 Nov., 1522. Four years later, 1526-7, he was sheriff of the city, and he subsequently occupied the mayoral chair on three occasions, 1537-8, 1548-9, and 1554-5. On 22 June, 1542, Dutton and the then mayor "rode to the Kinges Majeste" to pray the latter to remove the privilege of sanctuary from Chester,

<sup>176</sup> *L. & C. Rec. Soc.*, lxxi., 102, 114.

<sup>177</sup> One of the fields was known as "Pynchewar's Heys," and it was in the holding of William Goodman.

<sup>178</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., v., 63.

<sup>179</sup> *Chetham Soc.* (old S.), liv., 63.

<sup>180</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., iii., 46.

<sup>181</sup> Mayer MS., No. 50.

<sup>182</sup> *vide* Freeman's Rolls for both years.

<sup>183</sup> *Chetham Soc.* (old S.), liv., 48.

<sup>184</sup> *L. & C. Rec. Soc.*, lxxi., 102, 114.

whither it had been recently transferred from Manchester. This appeal was granted at the expense of the town of Stafford.<sup>185</sup> In 1555 Dutton was present at the trial of George Marsh.<sup>186</sup> He presented the Corporation with "a flat bowle [of silver] waing xx<sup>vnc</sup>'s" which, with other plate, was melted down to meet the expenses of the Siege.<sup>187</sup> A pedigree of this Chester branch of the Duttons, with more detailed information respecting this individual, is printed in *The Duttons of Dutton*.

RICHARD HOUGH, of Leighton and Thornton Hough, was born in 1507, and married Christian, daughter of Sir George Calveley, of the Lea, knight. His son married Jane, base daughter of Thomas Cromwell, earl of Essex, and this connection doubtless served Hough in good stead in enabling him to secure some of the plunder of the dissolved religious houses. Hough died 10 Dec., 1573, and his *inquisitio post mortem* has been lost. In the abstract of it printed in Ormerod<sup>188</sup> there is no mention of Chester property.

The following narrative gleaned from Star Chamber records of the time of Henry VIII. gives some insight into what appears to have been a somewhat truculent and unscrupulous character, living in turbulent days.<sup>189</sup>

On a certain day Richard Hough "squier with a great "nowmber of evil doers lay in awayte to murde" one John Mascy, esquire, of Puddington, who was the king's searcher of the port of Chester, as the latter, with his servants, was going home from Chester "about fyve of the "clok at afternone levyng him [Mascy] lying for ded." At the same time Hough "shamefully murtherd oon "Rondulph Davenport, gentilmon," a servant and kinsman of Mascy, and wounded and mangled other retainers who were left for dead, whereupon the misdoers "fled out "of the shire and countrey."

<sup>185</sup> *Sheaf*, 1st S., i., 214.

<sup>186</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., iii., 46.

<sup>187</sup> *Sheaf*, 1st S., i., 170.

<sup>188</sup> ii., 553.

<sup>189</sup> *L. & C. Rec. Soc.*, lxxi., 113, 114, 122, 123.



With a view to excusing the murder, and obtaining a pardon for Hough and immunity for his estate, near kinsmen of the culprit, with the compliance of Henry Hockenhull, of Prenton, coroner of Wirral, took steps which resulted in the jury being composed of their tenants and servants. It is related, however, that two of the jurors would not agree to join in giving the desired verdict, and these were accordingly omitted from the report made by the coroner. This worthy, it was further alleged, would not suffer one William Clayton, a sergeant of the king, to challenge the verdict, and went so far as to lock the doors of the church wherein the inquest was held, to keep the sergeant out. The coroner also unlawfully read a letter from Hough in which the latter excused himself of the murder. Among the witnesses on the defendant's behalf was Thomas Pyllyn, gentleman, doubtless Hough's fellow tenant at the Grey Friars. In a certificate of 1564 Hough is shewn as favourable to the "new religion."<sup>190</sup>

### 11.—THE SITE.

Many have been the conjectures made as to the actual site of the monastery of the Chester Grey Friars. It is located by most authorities in the parish of Holy Trinity.<sup>191</sup> Some of them go further and say that it, together with the Black and White Friaries, was near Nicholas Street,<sup>192</sup> while others state that it was near the Water Gate.<sup>193</sup> The site might, with reason, be looked for in the neighbourhood of "Grey Friars," the byeway which connects Nicholas Street and the Walls, but this name is misleading, as the road was not known as "Grey Friars" before the beginning of the last century (the earlier name being "Smith's Walk"), and the Friary, after which it is called, was situated a considerable distance away. Han-shall<sup>194</sup> writes of Smith's Walk being erroneously called

<sup>190</sup> *Sheaf*, 3rd S., vii., 99.

<sup>191</sup> Tanner, *op. cit.*, Cheshire vii., Chester 10.

<sup>192</sup> *Vale Royal*, ii., 22.

<sup>193</sup> Dugdale's *Monast. Angl.*, vi., 1510.

<sup>194</sup> 256.

Grey Friars in 1817, but the street does not appear to have been officially so called until the middle of the nineteenth century, and the re-naming may have been influenced by some investigations made by the Rev. W. H. Massie. This gentleman, at a meeting of the Chester Archæological Society, held on 3 Feb., 1852, "pointed out upon a map "places which, he asserted, were the sites of the three "friaries, as well as their inclosures, churches, etc."<sup>195</sup> He then remarked that the highest authorities placed "the "Black Friars about the Linen Hall, and the Grey Friars "on south of Nicholas Street, with its entrance from "Smith's Walk."<sup>196</sup> The pages of the *Journal*<sup>197</sup> shew that in 1856 there was some doubt as to whether Mr. Massie's contention was accurate, or whether, as had more frequently been supposed, the house of the Grey Friars stood to the north of Watergate Street, and that of the Black Friars to the south.

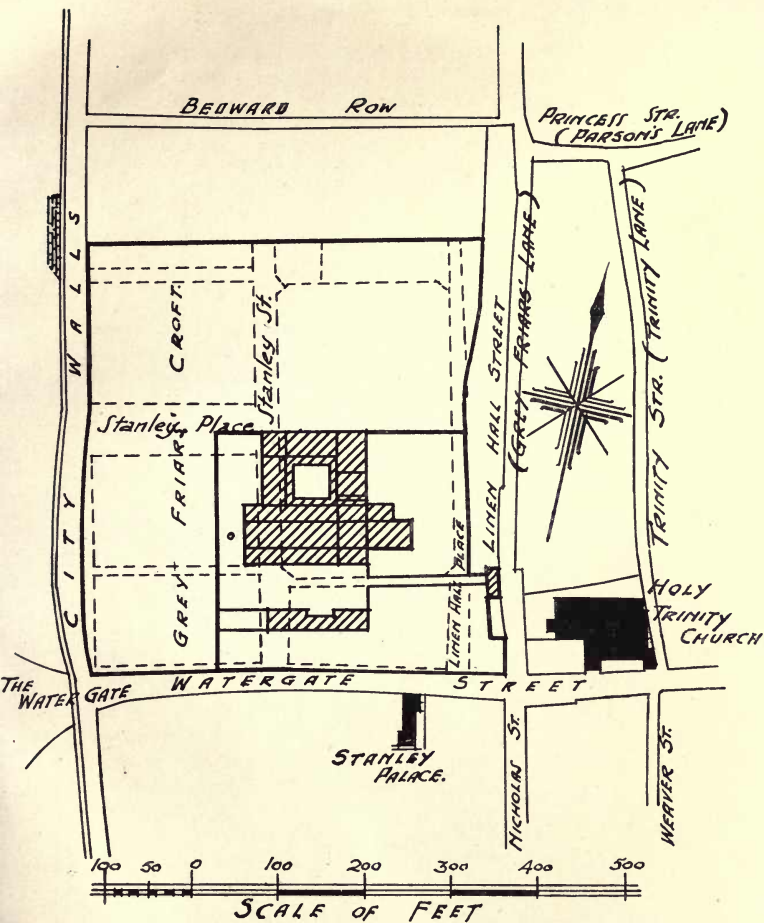
There can, however, be no doubt that Mr. Massie's theory was incorrect, and that the Grey Friars' house was on the north side of Watergate Street. The earliest evidence of this is to be found in a list of Chester streets in the time of the third Edward [1327-1377].<sup>198</sup> In this list it is stated that Berward Street, which, the context makes clear, can only be one of the numerous names by which the present Linenhall Street was known, "begenneth at the "Graye frers gate," and as the other extremity of Berward Street is given as Barne Lane (the modern King Street), the Friary must have been situated at the Watergate Street termination. The following reference confirms the situation at the southern end of Linenhall Street (or the Crofts

<sup>195</sup> *Journal*, O.S., i., 331.

<sup>196</sup> This view, i.e., that the Grey Friars was on the opposite side of Watergate Street to the Linen Hall, was taken by the author of *A short history and description of Chester*, written at the time of the erection of the City Gaol. The work is an early edition of the hand-book printed by J. Fletcher in 1791.

<sup>197</sup> O.S., i., 474.

<sup>198</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, 256; Hemingway, *op. cit.*, i., 403; and *Cheshire Sheaf*, 1st S., i., 239. This record was copied into the Assembly Book of the Corporation in the time of Thomas Dutton, mayor of Chester, 1567 to 1573.



Map of the district in which the Chester Grey Friary was situated, shewing the approximate position of the Church and buildings.



Lane as it is here called), and further, it locates the Friary as on the west side of the lane.

[1396] 20 R. II. Oct. 30. Grant of land in the Croftes within the liberty of the city between the lands of Ranulph the clerk and John de Whitmor on the one side and the rector of Holy Trinity on the other, and extending from Trinity lane to the Crofts lane, over against the Friars Minors.<sup>199</sup>

Linenhall Street was also known as Chad's Lane,<sup>200</sup> Greyfriars Lane, and Loughor or Lower Lane. Several instances of the use of these alternative names occur in 1480, 1532, etc. The first is in a grant of city lands :—

1480. A void parcel of land in Gray Fryars Lowne in length 48 rods and in breadth 8. Leased to Peter Smyth, merchant.<sup>201</sup> The second occurs in a grant of property to the parish of Holy Trinity, which included "a howse in the Grey frerys "Lane lyinge next to the Grey frers gate."<sup>202</sup> At the present time there is a warehouse and shop immediately opposite and practically corresponding in length with the west front of Holy Trinity Church. These premises belong to that parish and doubtless occupy the site of the house referred to, and so locate the entrance to the friary as immediately to the north, which agrees with the position on Holme's plan and with the recent discoveries on the site. The following extract from a rental of city lands, etc., in Chester, made shortly before the Dissolution, is another instance :—

[1534/5] 36 Hen. VIII. Grey Frere Lane. The occupacon of the Drapers for a certeyn place to byld on whiche thei putt theire cariage in nygh to the yate of the freres mynors by yere viijd.<sup>203</sup>

In Harl. MS. 2150 it is mentioned that the Drapers' paid viijd. rent for their "caredge house nere to ye Greye frere "lane ende."<sup>204</sup>

<sup>199</sup> *Moore MSS.* (L. & C. Rec. Soc., lxvii.), 149.

<sup>200</sup> "From it leading to the old Church of St. Chad." (Hanshall, 288). That Linenhall Street was ever called St. Chad's Lane is open to doubt. The Church of St. Chad was reached by a lane diverging from Linenhall Street and not directly off the latter.

<sup>201</sup> *Ledger of Grants and Leases, 1356 to 1775. Corporation MSS.*, f. 76.

<sup>202</sup> Harl. MS., 2177, f. 23.

<sup>203</sup> Harl. MS., 2125, f. 261a.

<sup>204</sup> Morris, 306.



Further references occur in the volume of leases of city lands, as under :—

1574. A void parcel of land in lez Crofts then late a muck-hill and [*sic*] the lane leading from the said [*sic*] street on the east part adjoining the said [*? Grey Friars*] wall and under the wall called the Drapers' Caryadge House, leased to Edward Trevor, draper, etc.

1574. A void place in Gray fryers lane near Gray fryers wall on the west and on the east of White [*?Grey*] fryars lane and the Drapers' Caryadge House, leased to Nicholas White, merchant, etc.

1574. A parcel of land on the north of Watergate street and on the east of the lane leading to the Crofts and Gray Fryars Wall and adjoining to the Drapers' Caryadge House, leased to Edward Marten, draper, etc.

In 1596 this lane was still called Grey Friars' Lane,<sup>205</sup> and, indeed, more than one hundred and fifty years later advertisements in the *Courant*<sup>206</sup> refer to "Lower Lane otherwise "Grey Fryars Lane." The origin of the name "Lower Lane" lies in the fact that until the end of the first half of the eighteenth century this was the lowest or most westerly lane on that side of Watergate Street, the remainder of the street bounding the precincts of the Grey Friars; Linenhall Place and Stanley Street not having been constructed.<sup>207</sup>

Having now, from documentary evidence, located the site and entrance to the Friary with some certainty, reference may be made to the old bird's eye views, maps, and plans, all of post Reformation date, but of which several were published within a reasonable time of that event, and while the friary buildings were still extant. Although these evidences are not, in some instances, over reliable as regards details, useful deductions are to be gained by a critical examination and comparison of them.

In these maps it will be noticed that the north-western section of Chester, bounded by the city walls on the north and west, by Watergate Street on the south, and by Linen-

<sup>205</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, 270.

<sup>206</sup> *Courant*, 21st Nov., 1749; *Sheaf*, 3rd S., x., 86.

<sup>207</sup> Linenhall Street appears to have received its present name on the opening of the Linenhall in 1778. *Vide Courant* for 22nd Sept., 1778.

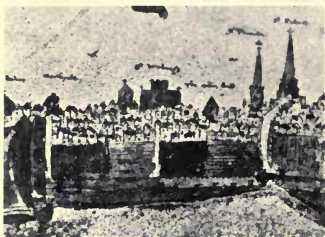




1



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3



4

Sections of plans and views of Chester  
(The numbers correspond with those in the text).

hall Street and its northern extension on the east, is generally depicted as divided into three rectangular enclosures. These correspond with Lady Barrow's Hey, the Infirmary and its grounds before the recent extension, and the land between Bedward Row and Watergate Street, which last contained the Grey Friary. The following notes are based on the maps, etc. :—

1.—BRAUN'S MAP OF CHESTER, 1572-1618.<sup>208</sup> The southerly rectangle is subdivided into eastern and western portions. The former is bordered by continuous ranges of gabled houses on the three sides contiguous to the streets, and a building with two gables occupying the inner south-east corner, which may denote one of the friary buildings. The remainder of the inner space is occupied by two gardens and an orchard. The western half, a field, is enclosed by a wall, evidently the area known as the Grey Friars Croft and later as the Yacht Field. Nothing in the nature of an ecclesiastical building is to be seen.

2.—WILLIAM SMITH'S MAP, 1580.<sup>209</sup> The same remarks apply generally, but very few houses can be distinguished, and the execution is rough. The gardens cannot be recognised as such.

3.—WILLIAM SMITH'S WESTERN PROSPECT OF CHESTER, 1580.<sup>210</sup> This shews a mass of houses at the eastern end of the rectangle and *two* fields between Bedward Row and Watergate Street. One of the buildings among the houses near the south *may* be intended for a tower.

4.—THE PROSPECT OF CHESTER; THE SOUTH-WEST SIDE. UNDATED.<sup>211</sup> This is evidently later than Smith's. The three rectangles and a mass of houses at the eastern side are shewn, but no tower nor anything that could be reasonably identified as part of the friary.

5.—W. HOLLAR'S MAP OF CHESTER, *circa* 1610.<sup>211</sup> In this map the rectangle does not extend as far north as in the

<sup>208</sup> From *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, vol. iii., pl. 3 and reproduced in Morris, *juxta* 528.

<sup>209</sup> Reproduced in Morris, *juxta* 256.

<sup>210</sup> Reproduced in Morris, *juxta* 512.

<sup>211</sup> Reproduced in Hemingway, ii., frontispiece.

earlier ones. A few houses only are shewn on the Linenhall Street frontage, and perhaps one block at the east end of the Watergate Street frontage. Lines, indicating the gardens, are shewn in the eastern half of the rectangle. On the north and south there are clearly defined walls, and on the west, running near to and parallel with the city walls, an equally straight but less clearly defined boundary. Near the centre of this enclosure is an isolated lofty tower and steeple, evidently a relic of the church of St. Francis.

6.—SPEED'S MAP OF CHESTER, 1610.<sup>212</sup> This is similar to Hollar's but contains less detail. The friary enclosure extends further north than in Hollar's map, and there are massive boundary walls on the southern and western sides. There is a block of houses in the centre of the eastern boundary and at the south-east corner. A tower is shewn but it is of less imposing dimensions than the one given by Hollar, and it is surmounted by a structure that may be intended to denote a partially demolished steeple.

7.—UNIDENTIFIED MAP OF CHESTER, *circa* 1690.<sup>213</sup> The tower is shewn and the enclosure has strong walls on the south and west. The boundary on the north and east is less clearly defined. Midway on the eastern frontage there is a series of gabled buildings, and others at the south eastern corner. Two gardens occupy the Bedward Row extremity.

8.—BUCK'S SOUTH-WEST PROSPECT OF CHESTER, 1728.<sup>214</sup> A number of houses, of a more or less considerable size, are shewn west of Holy Trinity Church, but no building of an ecclesiastical appearance. There is a tower, or more probably dovecote, but this is much to the north of the site of the tower of the church of St. Francis. The building is similarly situated on other contemporary representations of Chester, and it is surrounded by a smaller enclosure than the tower on Hollar's and Speed's maps.

To turn from maps to printed references, the remarks of Pennant should, perhaps, first of all be quoted. They are

<sup>212</sup> Reproduced in Morris, 227.

<sup>213</sup> Chester Public Lib. Print No. C. 308.

<sup>214</sup> B.M. Print K. 9.3\*. Also Chester Public Lib. Print No. A. 8.





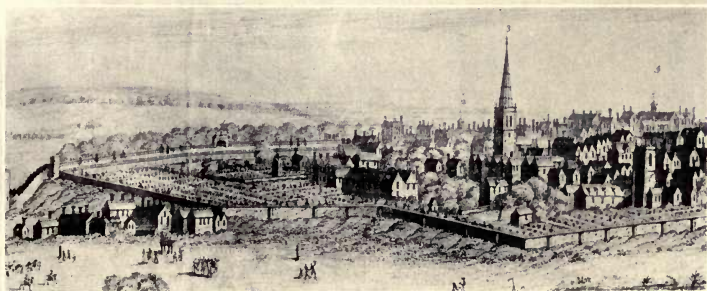
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8



as follows :—" I imagine that this [the Grey Friary] stood " in the Yatch Field, near the place occupied by the new " Linen Hall. By Speed's map of Chester it appears that " there was a church there in his time, and to this day " [circa 1778] painted tiles and stained glass, reliques of " ecclesiastical finery, are still dug up."<sup>215</sup> The buildings are recorded as existing in a tolerably entire condition to the middle of the seventeenth century,<sup>216</sup> and a part of the house was to be seen at a later date, a portion, possibly, of the buildings referred to in the appended advertisement.

1750 Jan. 23. " To be sold several very good houses, stables, coach houses, garden and timber yard, in the Grey Fryars, pleasantly situated near the Roo-Dee in the city of Chester, held by a lease wherein three fresh lives are now in being. Apply to Mr. Taylor or Mr. Kelsall, etc." (*Chester Courant*).

Later it appears that Mr. Hesketh had some wine vaults which were constructed out of a part of the friary.<sup>217</sup> These were afterwards demolished and, as shewn below, the owner built a house on the site. This house was on the west side of Stanley Street and, in connection with it, Crane relates, that while a cellar there was being excavated, tiles, which had been portions of the flooring of a church, and buried bodies were dug up ; and, on this, he apparently bases a statement that the church, which also occupied part of the roadway was that of St. Chad.<sup>218</sup> So far as the church of St. Chad is connected with this discovery, the statement is erroneous, as there is every reason to believe that that structure was several hundred yards to the north or north-

<sup>215</sup> *Tours in Wales* (1883 ed.), i., 236.

<sup>216</sup> Ormerod, i., 349; Tanner, *Chester*, vii., 10; and Dugdale, v., 1510.

<sup>217</sup> *Broster's Guide* (1782 ed.), 24; (1797 ed.), 25.

<sup>218</sup> Hemingway, ii., 151. In connection with these vaults and a house of Mr. Hesketh, an incorrect deduction has been drawn by Mr. Watkin, in his *Roman Cheshire* (154). He states that in 1885 the premises described were in the occupation of Messrs. Blackburne & Co., wine merchants. It is clear that the premises to which he refers are those at the junction of Watergate Street and Trinity Street. These certainly were, at one time, occupied by the Heskeths, but they were not even near the friary, and had been built or renovated in 1745 by Henry Bennett, of Moston Hall, whose crest is carved on the keystone of a window and cast on two leaden spouthheads. These premises or earlier ones on the site had been in the occupation of a notorious coiner (*vide* Hemingway, ii., 7 *et seq.*).

east, and there can be little doubt that the remains found were on the actual site of the church of St. Francis.

About 1830 other tiles were discovered in Stanley Street, and eight complete specimens and four fragments of these were presented to the Chester Archæological Society in 1850,<sup>219</sup> and were illustrated in the *Journal*. Some, if not all, are still to be seen in the Museum. So far as can be ascertained no further discoveries are recorded from this time until the recent excavations were made. The late City Surveyor, Mr. I. Matthews Jones, M.I.C.E., said that for the last half century he remembered nothing of interest being found in the neighbourhood.

Another possible relic of the Friary is a short square pillar of red sandstone, richly ornamented with a diamond-shaped pattern, rosettes, and a design like a fleur-de-lis of decidedly Tudor appearance. Let into the upper surface there is a brass plate which bears this inscription:—"A fragment of the Roman hypocaust discovered in Watergate Street, Chester, and which was erected circa fifty years before Christ" (*sic*). It is generally supposed that this pillar was one of those forming the remains of a sudatory and hypocaust discovered in January, 1779, near the Watergate, while sinking the foundations for the Watergate Flagg houses. Foote Gower, however, says that the discoveries were made on the site of the new Linen Hall.<sup>220</sup> It is said that a number of the *pilæ* were taken to Oulton Park, and Watkin was informed that only one could be found. He adds that one of the *pilæ* was, however, preserved in the garden of the house adjoining the Chester railway station, formerly occupied by Mr. John Broster,<sup>221</sup> and that it was removed in 1884 to its present resting place—the Grosvenor Museum. This *pila* agrees in general dimensions and character with the examples found in Bridge Street, but, if it ever had an existence in Roman times, it must have been considerably altered in the middle

<sup>219</sup> *Journal* (old Ser.), i., *juxta* 54.

<sup>220</sup> Watkin's *Roman Cheshire*, 152.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.* 156, quoting Brushfield (*Journal*, O.S., iii., 72). The house is Flookersbrook Cottage (*vide Sheaf*, 3rd S., xiii., 65).



ages. Watkin says that it was exhibited at a meeting of the British Archæological Association, and at once pronounced to be of mediæval origin. This *pila* or short pillar, it is suggested, may have belonged to the Franciscan friary.<sup>222</sup>

In the yard attached to No. 2, Stanley Place, there are a number of representations of cats, lions, and other animals carved in red sandstone and of more or less grotesque style. They are supposed to have come from Holy Trinity church when that structure was rebuilt between 1865 and 1869, but this theory, so far as can be ascertained, rests simply on the fact that the church in question is in the near locality, and that the carving presumably had an ecclesiastical origin. The fragments seem rather large for the ornamentation of, say, a string-course of a building of the decorated style of architecture, but it is more probable that they were from the church of the Grey Friars (on the site of which they are practically now preserved) than from old Trinity Church. It will be remembered that the grant, in 1528, of the nave and aisles of St. Francis' Church intimates that it had been at least partially rebuilt within what were then recent years.

To turn now to the recent discoveries. What remained of the Linen Hall, *i.e.*, the high enclosing walls and the stables and offices which were built against its inner face, together with the enclosed ground, was, two years ago, purchased by the Chester Race Company. The buildings were old and unsuited for present day requirements and, in the early months of 1920, the demolition of all the old buildings, including the enclosing walls, was commenced, preparatory to reconstruction of the stables on a more approved model.

The work was carried on gradually, and the northern half dealt with first. Nothing was discovered in this section but, it should be noted, the new buildings did not require deep foundations, and the excavations were therefore somewhat shallow.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, 187.



In the summer, however, work was started on the other half of the enclosure, and this yielded interesting results. One of the first operations was the excavation of a drainage trench from a point a few yards east of the main entrance, in a direct line parallel with Stanley Street, to connect with an existing drain beneath a passage which runs behind houses abutting on Watergate Street. This trench falls from two feet below the surface to eight feet below. The excavation disclosed numerous cross walls at varying distances along its length, a section of curious tiled flooring at the northern end, numerous human remains along the southern half, and near the southern extremity a flat section of what appeared to be Roman cement, which had been cut through for building one of the cross foundation walls mentioned above.<sup>223</sup>

Subsequently an excavation for a sloping supplementary drain was made from east to west, which disclosed the existence of a considerable length of an ashlar wall, with a plain splayed plinth on the northern face.

South of the eastern extremity of this last mentioned trench, in process of excavation for the foundations of loose boxes, walls were found, in two instances surmounted by skilfully worked stones. The first consisted of a section of wall surmounted by a stone with a plain splay facing north. South-east of this there was another section of wall surmounted by stones with similar splays but facing east, and with a central one having an additional moulding for the base of a small pillar. At further points to the south of this the wall could be traced but no turning was discovered. The excavations shewed that originally the ground sloped to the west, and that when the Linen Hall was built the ground level on the west was raised about four feet.

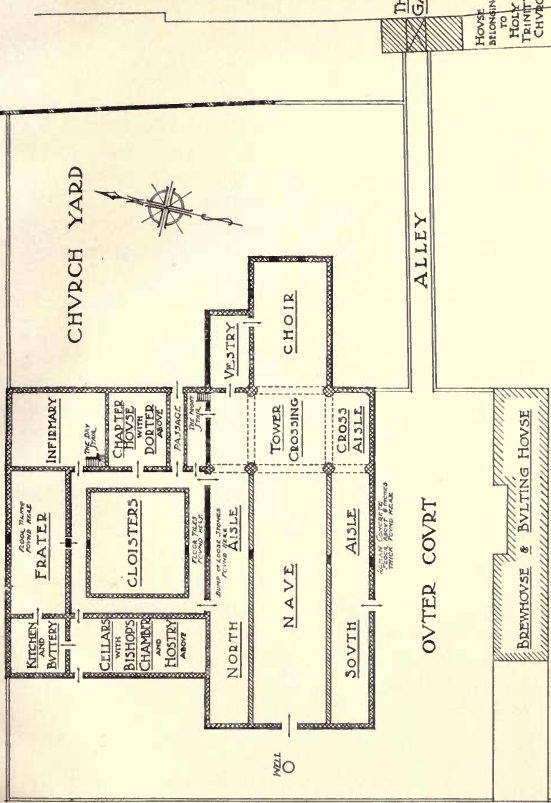
The bulk of the remains were found within two feet of the surface, and it is to be greatly regretted that it was not

<sup>223</sup> It has been suggested that the Franciscan friary was built on a Roman foundation (Watkin, 154 *et seq.*), as several Roman bricks and coins were discovered when the Linenhall was built (Hemingway, ii., 352). This is borne out by the recent find.

GREY FRIARS' CROFT

GREY FRIARS' LANE

CHURCH YARD



ALLEY

THE GATEHOUSE

HOUSE BELONGING TO HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

BREWHOUSE & BULTING HOUSE

- INDICATES WALLING ACTUALLY SEEN
- ▨ INDICATES POSSIBLE WALLING
- ▩ INDICATES ASSUMED WALLING

Plan of the Chester Grey Friary (partly conjectural but chiefly based on the result of excavations, records, and a seventeenth-century plan).

WATERGATE STREET





found possible to take advantage of this unique opportunity to trace more of the plan and other features of the Friary, but the present cost of labour, and anxiety lest any additional work should delay the reconstruction, prevented any steps in this direction.

## 12.—THE CHURCH AND PRECINCTS.

In considering the probable appearance of the friary of the Chester Franciscans, it should be remembered that ostentation of all description was deprecated, and indeed prohibited by the rules of the Order. It was considered that erections of wattle and daub, and boundaries defined by a simple ditch and paling were all that should be allowed, and there are instances of stone buildings being demolished by order of the provincial minister. If, therefore, this principle was strictly observed, nothing in the nature of a beautiful church or conventual building could have been created, and a modern writer has said that to the very last the friaries retained their "primitive, squat, low and meagre proportions."<sup>224</sup> On the other hand, the statement of Matthew Paris, which has been quoted earlier, does not agree with this; neither does the accusation of Pope Clement V., which was denied by the friars. The pontiff said that they were "building beautiful churches and convents" which seemed "fitter for magnates than mendicants, and that they had church ornaments of greater value than those belonging to the great cathedrals."<sup>225</sup>

It is evident that the Grey Friars of Chester quickly departed from the primitive rule of the Order, if indeed they ever observed it, and that stone was largely used in the construction of their church and other buildings.

The precincts were surrounded by a substantial wall of stone, and were divided into eastern and western halves. The latter was a croft known later as "The Yacht Field." The eastern half contained the church and convent buildings, and a rough plan of this section (made in the middle

<sup>224</sup> *Mon. Franc.*, i., xviii.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*, ii., xxi.

of the seventeenth century) gives an idea of the arrangement, although it is extremely perplexing in some directions.<sup>226</sup> This plan is of an oblong enclosure with the longer sides on the east and west and, for lack of something more reliable, must be taken as the basis of any description of the friary.

The ENTRANCE was near the southern end of Linenhall Street. Here there would be a gatehouse with lodging for the brother whose duty lay at this post, and also probably an almonry where the daily dole of broken meat was given to the poor. In close connection there would be an establishment which was the equivalent of the modern "casual ward."

Within there was an "alley" between the churchyard on the north and a plot of land on the south, of the use or appearance of which there is no record. The Alley led to what appears to have been the Outer Court of the Friary. This Court was bounded on the north by the Church, on the west by the Grey Friars' Croft, afterwards called Yacht Field, and on the south by certain buildings, in all probability including the bake house and the brew house.

#### THE CHURCH.

It is probable that the original church consisted simply of choir and nave, but, at the Suppression, the "great church"<sup>227</sup> of St. Francis had, in addition, two side aisles and "a cross yle" on the south side. This does not appear to have been an additional south aisle, but a horizontal chapel built at right angles to the south aisle and not breaking the ground plan of the latter. In all likelihood the later church had been rebuilt in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries and the side aisles had then been added.<sup>228</sup> "Such rebuildings were not uncommon in town churches, where the large naves were useful for preaching; while the number of lay burials in the churches,

<sup>226</sup> Harl. MS., 2073, f. 92/2.

<sup>227</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, 459.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. The Austin Friars' Church, London, and the Black Friars' Church, Norwich.



“ as well as the number of chantries founded in them by bequests, made the enlargement of the nave area necessary. A very large number of important and well-to-do people sought interment in the naves of friary churches<sup>229</sup> . . . and although friary buildings did not compete in dignity with the great monastic churches of earlier foundation, they were often of some importance, and there were many large examples.”<sup>230</sup>

The excavations which were recently made brought to light what were assumed to be the eastern half of the foundations of the north aisle wall, small sections of the north and east walls of the chancel, and foundations of the north and south walls of the earlier church. It is probable that the nave and the two side aisles extended westward beyond Stanley Street, as it will be remembered that “ tiles, which had been portions of the flooring of a church, and buried bodies ” were dug up, in Stanley Street and beyond, on more than one occasion.

The Church and Choir were slated, and this points to a more or less accentuated ridged roof. The Chancel or Choir extended clear of the two side aisles. As to the latter, that on the north was “ ledyde in certen longe spoutes descendynge to a pane of the Cloyster lede into gutters of lede.” The South Aisle was also leaded and “ had certeyn gutters of lede.” The Cross Aisle was “ ledyde.”

As regards the interior of the Church, from various sources, such as the inventory of the furniture, vestments, etc., taken at the Dissolution, it is possible to obtain some idea.

In “ the gre ” or Choir there were :—

“ on ye autr a fayer tabull alybast’

ij autr clothes w<sup>t</sup> a frütlet & a steynynd clothe before ye aut’

ij candelstecks laten

An olde tabull alybast’

A lampe bason

A payer of organs

<sup>229</sup> Cf. The Black Friars’ Church, London.

<sup>230</sup> *Comm.* by Mr. A. H. Thompson, M.A., F.S.A.

A holywat' stope  
 A sort of boks for ye q̄re of fryers vse  
 An olde broken crosse laten  
 In ye q̄re & chyrche ij sakerynge bells  
 ij pylous on ye aut'."

At the sale of the furniture, etc., "a pore payer of orgeyns," doubtless those mentioned above, fetched 3s. 4d. The sacring bell was small, and hung inside the church, usually on the rood screen. It was rung at the end of the Consecration Prayer, or "prayer of sacring," and announced the completion of the act of sacrifice. A few of these bells still exist in their original positions.<sup>231</sup>

In the body of the Church, the only articles recorded in the inventory are:—

"In ye chyrche iiij tabulls alybast'  
 v steyned clothes olde."

For the ostensible purpose of defraying debts "all the "stuffe of ye vestre and churche, w<sup>t</sup> the kytchyn & oder "offyces by p'celles preysed and solde for ijli. iiij. viijd." In addition, "all the pore tables of ye awters in the quere " & churche w<sup>t</sup> the pachemete & glasse, w<sup>t</sup> the yron in the "same quere and churche solde for xlvj<sup>s</sup>. viij<sup>d</sup>."

In churches of this character there were numerous subsidiary altars and chapels served by chantry priests. These altars were either endowed by benefactors or created in recognition of benefactions. Of such foundations in this church there is record of one endowed in 1293 by John de Baruuē, chaplain, with the sustenance of a priest who was required to celebrate for ever for the salvation of the soul of the founder.

There must have been many monuments in the Church, but none have been found, and all that is known is that Robert Grosvenor of Hulme was buried here about the year 1286, and that an altar tomb, on or about which his arms were painted, was erected on the spot. This information was given as evidence at St. Mary's Chester, in January, 1386, when depositions were taken as to the respective rights of the Grosvenor and Scrope families to the

<sup>231</sup> *Church Bells*, by H. B. Walters, 88.

arms—azure, a bend or—claimed by both.<sup>232</sup> Many witnesses affirmed that they had seen these arms painted in the church at the place where Robert, the great-grandfather of the Grosvenor claimant, Sir Robert, had been buried about one hundred years earlier, as will be seen from the following extracts:—

Sir Laurence de Dutton, knight, 45, deposed that he had seen the arms painted anciently on an altar in the church of the Frers Menors of Chester where the great-grandfather of the said Sir Robert Grosvenor was buried about a hundred years ago, as he had heard.

Robert de Toft, 38, deposed that he had seen the arms there depicted on an ancient table.

John le Armurer, mayor of Chester, deposed that he had seen the arms there depicted of old on a table of an altar.

John de Camphurst (? Capenhurst), 35, deposed that he had seen the arms there painted of old as appeared to the view.

Randle Maynwaryng, 26, John le Clyf', of Macclesfield, esquire, 50, and Henry de Beeston, 44, all deposed that they had seen the arms there.

Geoffrey de Boidell, 38, deposed that he had seen the arms painted where the great-grandfather of the said Sir Robert was buried, as he had heard the Friars and many others say.

Robert de Dounes, 44, deposed that he had seen the arms on the wall in the church.

William Danyell, 50, deposed that he had seen the arms there painted of old on a table below an altar.

Roger de Moldeworth, 50, deposed that he had seen the arms painted of old on ancient tables in the church of the Frers Menors of Chester and of Tarven.

Hugh de Coton, the younger, 35, and John de Burgh's, 41, deposed that they had seen the arms painted there on an old table below an altar.

Of Plate there is little information, the only articles on record being those secured by the Bishop of Dover for the

<sup>232</sup> *Scrope and Grosvenor Controversy*, ed. by Sir H. Nicholas.

King's use, namely :—

“ a lytell Chalys  
a bonde of a lytyll maser  
vj small spones.”

As was customary in these churches, the Tower probably stood between the Nave and the Chancel. In the inventory it is described as having “ the steple a sharpe spyar, “ lytyll lede w<sup>t</sup> ij belles in ytt.” A representation of the tower and steeple is to be seen on Hollar's plan of Chester, but the impressive building shewn is clearly greatly exaggerated in size, as it was certainly not one of the outstanding features of Chester which the plan might lead one to imagine. The steeple appears to be in two sections, the lower one almost vertical, and the upper one a sharp cone. In Speed's map the tower is also represented, but a splayed section directly connects the tower with the lower and vertical section of the steeple, and the cone is not shewn at all. It may be inferred that the upper half of the steeple, possibly a timber erection, had fallen down or been removed in the years that elapsed between the execution of the two plans. A door is shewn in the western face of the tower. In 1588 there was in the precincts a pigeon house, and it seems probable that the tower had been converted to this use.

It has been suggested that the square building north of the Chancel, as shewn on Holme's plan, was the Vestry. The contents of this chamber are included in the inventory, and were as follows :—

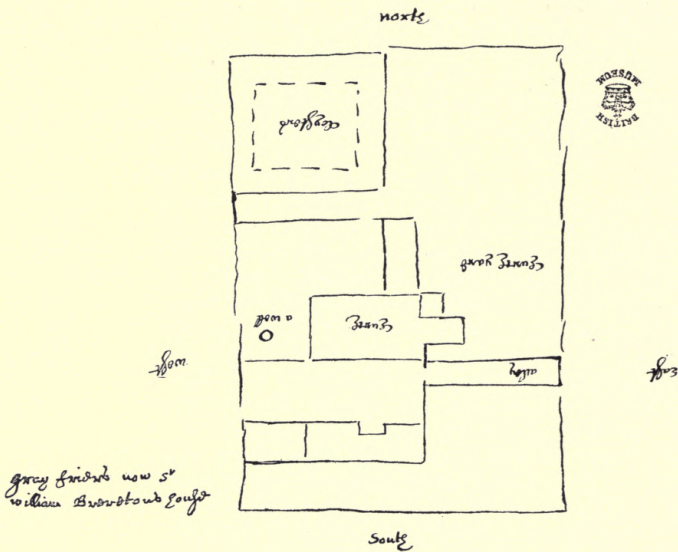
|                              |                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| “ xv chesabulls for ye pryst | iiij aut' clothes |
| xvj tenacles good & bad      | one surples       |
| vij albs good & bad          | ij towells        |
| vj amys                      | ij gret chests    |
| vij copys                    | an olde senser.”  |

#### CONVENTUAL BUILDINGS AND LAND.

Friaries in towns were sometimes built on confined sites, but the arrangement of the Chester house generally, as shewn by Holme, is unusual, and the means of communication between the outer Court or Courts is by no means







Facsimile of plan of Friary drawn by R. Holme III.

clear. Further, the separation of the CLOISTER from the Church, and the inferred absence of buildings behind the north and west walks is, so far as can be learned, unique. Allowance must be made for variations, such as the situation of the Cloister on the north side of the Church (an example of which can be seen in the neighbouring cathedral), but, where indications of friary buildings remain, the plan is usually quite normal.<sup>233</sup> It is therefore more than probable that when Holme made the plan demolitions and new buildings had caused the site to be involved and so difficult to make out that he merely sketched a rough indication of the position of the Cloister itself. It must accordingly be assumed that the south walk of the Cloister abutted on the Nave of the Church, and some confirmation of this will be found in the statement that the north aisle was "ledyde in certen longe spoutes descendynge to a pane " of the Cloyster lede into gutters of lede." The foundation walls recently uncovered lend further strength to this assumption.

Of the buildings ranged behind the Cloister walks, the CHAPTER HOUSE may be mentioned first. The grant of 1528 to the merchants and sailors of Chester is dated from this building, but there is no other reference to it. In accordance with the Benedictine plan, which was adopted by monastic orders generally, the Chapter House was in the eastern range of Cloister buildings, and it was entered by a door in the centre of the eastern walk. The Chapter Houses of the mendicant orders were not elaborate structures, and it is probable that the one at the Chester Grey Friary was on the ground floor and beneath the dormer.

The DORTER or Dormitory of a monastery was usually carried throughout the upper storey of the buildings behind the eastern Cloister, as far as the transept of the church, if it possessed one. It normally had a day stair connecting with the Cloister, and a night stair communicating directly with the transept. The dormer was usually

<sup>233</sup> *E.g.*, the Black Friars at Bristol, now a Quaker School, where the dormer and frater ranges still remain.

divided into a series of cubicles with a window to each and with a passage down the centre. In Chester "the cellys" and "pt clossys in the dorter and cellehouse" were sold for ten shillings at the Dissolution.

Records are silent with regard to the important building known as the FRATER or Refectory, but, although Holme makes no allowance for it, there can be little doubt that it was situated in the northern range of Cloister buildings, opposite to the Church.

The account or rental states that there was "one close" and a stone wall round the same on the west of the "church" (*i.e.*, the Yacht field), and that "a certain house or chamber built on the east side of the close" was "called the ostrye," otherwise HOSTRY or Guest House. The general situation of this building is clearly indicated, and it might be looked for in the range of buildings behind the western cloister; a situation in which it was to be found in certain friaries. Mr. Thompson, however, does not favour this theory and writes as follows:—  
"I think that the existence of a hostry as a normal part of the western range in the monastic plan is rather doubtful. Where the abbot or prior in houses of monks and canons had his lodging on this side of the cloister, his hall, in which distinguished guests were entertained, was frequently on the upper floor of this range, or communicated with it; and there might be one or two guest chambers in the range, especially where (as in some monasteries) the great cellar was below the frater, and there would thus be more room for guests in the western building. But, for ordinary guests, the hostry was usually a building outside the cloister. In his reconstruction of the plan of the London Blackfriars, Mr. Clapham shews that there was a guest-house in the western range, but qualifies it as the *superior* guest-house, and, in speaking of monasteries generally, all that can be said with certainty is that the better class of guests were entertained and sometimes lodged, where there was accommodation, in the western range. In friaries such

“ a custom must have been of rather late growth, as the  
 “ early friaries cannot have contemplated hospitality on  
 “ the scale of the ordinary monastery.”

Frequently chambers were dedicated or assigned to notable individuals, and reference here occurs to a room known as “ le Bysshopp Chamber ” which, together with the Hostry and Common Kitchen, is described as being on the east side of the Yacht field, possibly in the western cloister range.

The COMMON KITCHEN was also situated on the eastern side of the Yacht Field, doubtless at the northern extremity of the western Cloister range, and near the Frater. It would be on the ground floor, a position which is to some extent confirmed by the statement that there was a chamber over it. At the Dissolution there were in “the Ketchyn” the following articles :—

“ A gret lede to stepe xx bushell malt  
 A gret brasse pott  
 iij other brasse potts & a posnet  
 ij panys & a skelet  
 ij brochys  
 A payer of [ ? cowbyerns]  
 A trevet & a gredyern  
 ij sawsers  
 A fryeyng pay  
 A nesegyn & a ladyng rok  
 A flesche hoke.”

As already mentioned, “ the stuffe . . . of the kytchyn  
 “ & oder offyces ” was appraised and sold in lots.

The BUTTERY was probably situated somewhere in the north-western corner of the Cloister ranges, and near to the Kitchen and Frater. According to the inventory “ The Butt ” contained :—

“ ij stonds  
 A cupborde  
 A pipe to lay In bride  
 ij pyps of lede.”

The INFIRMARY or “ Farmery ” of a conventual building was not only used by the sick, but was also the dwell-

ing of those religious who were too old or incapacitated to take part in the regular routine. The occupants were subjected to less rigorous discipline, and it was to some extent isolated from the Cloister. Sometimes the Infirmary was in the centre of the Outer Court, as at the Carmelite Friary at Hulne. At other times, however, it was situated at the south-east angle of the Cloister, near the Dorter, but with its buildings grouped round a subsidiary Cloister, as in the Dominican Friary of London. At Chester the Infirmary appears to have been in the eastern cloister range, as a house is mentioned as "abutting on the dorter on the east "part of le ffarmarye.'" This is an unusual situation, but, taking the above quotation into consideration, it is difficult to locate the Infirmary elsewhere.

The BREW HOUSE, together with the Bake House and Granary, was generally situated in the Outer Court, and, presumably, it is one of the buildings indicated in the south section of Holme's plan. At the Dissolution it contained :—

"A grett fornes & a mashynge combe,  
A yele fat & a stone trowe  
An almerie  
An hayer to drye on malt  
ij ale barrels."

The contents of the BULTING HOUSE or Bake House are also given, as under :—

"ij knedyng turnels  
A bultyng pype  
A basket  
A bultyng clothe  
A redell  
A meyle syffe."

A WELL is shewn by Holme immediately in front of the west door of the church. This would be somewhere behind the houses on the south side of Stanley Place, but nothing is known of it. During the present alterations at the Linen Hall a well was found almost in front of the main entrance and midway between Stanley Place and Linenhall Place. It was lined with old brick, wide, and very deep, and there were many feet of water at the bottom. This well was filled up.



The CHURCHYARD or Cemetery occupied a large plot of ground on the east of the Church and Cloisters, as indicated by Holme. It is not mentioned in the account of the Friary lands made at the Dissolution. Details of all the land and buildings are not given in the account, and possibly the Churchyard is included in what is not specified.

The CONVENT GARDEN and an ORCHARD were situated at the east side of the Church and Chancel, apparently abutting on the Churchyard.

In addition to the YACHT FIELD, to which several references have been made, there was a small toft on the east side of the church (query, the north-east or south-east corners of the precincts).

The rectangle which contained the site and lands of the Grey Friars has an approximate area of seven acres, and the bulk of this was included within the conventual boundaries; the northern section and part of the Linenhall Street frontage were, however, in other hands. There is no known record of the total extent of the Friary at the Dissolution, but, in 1622-3, Sir Peter Warburton died seized of "the site of the Grey Friars and four acres of "land appertaining thereto."<sup>234</sup> Taking all the available evidence into consideration, it is evident that the domain of the Chester Friary was of considerable extent, but at the present time there is no visible trace of this important establishment, unless a red sandstone wall be excepted. This wall is seven feet high and has a ridged coping. It is situated on the eastern side of the continuation of Linenhall Place, and extends northwards for approximately fifty yards from a point nearly opposite the north-east corner of the Linen Hall. The wall is broken at intervals for the back doors to houses opening upon Linenhall Street. It is suggested that this is a portion of the eastern boundary wall of the Friary.

The following extract of a deed relates to some of the land between the eastern boundary of the Friary and Linen-

<sup>234</sup> P.R.O., Chesh. Inq. p.m. 97.

hall Street :—

“ Grant from Robert Rogerson, mayor, to John Masey  
 “ son of Richard Masey, late of Podynton, of a plot of  
 “ ground with buildings thereon in the Crofts, lying in  
 “ length between the stone wall of the Friars Minors of  
 “ Chester and the channel (*canellam*) of the highway to the  
 “ said Crofts, and in breadth between the land which  
 “ Richard of Wirvyn held of the city and the land which  
 “ Lawrence the Smith held of the city and being in length  
 “ 22 cubits, which plot had of late been in the holding of  
 “ Sir John Mainwaring, knight, and of which the mayor  
 “ and commonalty are seised. Witnesses—John Coting-  
 “ ham, Roger Ledsham, Richard Raynford, Thomas Kent,  
 “ Thomas Cotingham, alderman. Dated 2 Dec. 11 Edw. IV.”  
 [1471]. Seal—an eagle’s head erased [Harl. MS. 2020,  
 f. 403.]

For three hundred years the Chester headquarters of the Franciscans filled a recognised place in the religious life of the city. Then the times changed, and for the next three centuries the site has been the successive scene of agricultural, commercial, and sporting activities, and there is nothing to remind the wayfarer of the great brotherhood whose house once existed here. Close by, on the field where the live stock of the friars grazed, a residential quarter was created less than a century and a half ago, and the “ genteel modern buildings ”<sup>235</sup> of mellowed red brick still stand on either side of a cobbled square. For long these houses were exclusively inhabited by the professional and leisured classes, but offices now encroach on the private residences more and more, and Stanley Place seems awaiting the next inevitable metamorphosis, which is at work on, what was until recently, the desolate shell of the once busy Linen Hall.

<sup>235</sup> Hemingway, ii., 12.



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